

Work Based Learning  
The Impact of  
Higher Education/Employer Engagement  
In North East England

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements of Teesside University  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2012

# **Work based learning: the Impact of Higher Education / Employer Engagement in North East England**

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## **Abstract**

This research (January 2009 to January 2012) described the impact of Work Based Learning (WBL) programmes on three large organisations involved in HE/employer engagement partnerships to up-skill experienced employees in NE England. A case study approach gathered rich qualitative data from public and private organisations, and their university partner which provided long-term, whole-day university-based master-class WBL programmes for University-accredited qualifications with the support of Higher Education Funding Council for England's Strategic Development Funding. The public organisation delivered its own certificate-level sessions; and a Foundation Degree was delivered by the University and the organisation's Directors. Modified action research observations of classes preceded a questionnaire profiling candidates, their motivations, and perspectives about WBL. Stakeholders' semi-structured interviews (Wengraf, 2001) answered: "how, why and with what consequences does the Mode 2 learning of the individual impact the Mode 2 learning of the organisation", premised on WBL using Mode 2 "how to" knowledge (Gibbons *et al*, 1994). Data, mainly collected from May to November 2010, was analysed using a modified grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) with fractal concept analysis (Wasserman, Clair and Wilson, 2009). Rich descriptions of the impacts of WBL from the perspectives of those involved in HE/employer engagement partnerships resulted in models for developing new partnerships and incorporating employer engagement within a university. Original contributions to WBL knowledge included the Courtyard Model based upon findings including types of knowledge/concepts/values that emerged from the research which may potentially lead to new pedagogies. Impacts of WBL included networking that carried the organisation's strategic vision into its culture to enhance its sustainability and possible growth. Candidates attributed valuing reputation, knowledge and people to universities as organisations. The Courtyard Model summarised the relationship between the impacts of WBL on the development of candidates and organisations in terms of reputation, knowledge, people, networks, culture and sustainability.

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## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been possible without the help of many people, all of whom are thanked, including those whose names are omitted. Thank you to the advisory team: Dr. Jenny Naish, Director of Studies, who has mentored and guided steadfastly, and Dr. Ruth Helyer, Supervisor, who has shown meticulous attention to detail. Each has demanded the highest standards by sharing profound knowledge and wise insights with absolute dedication, patience and professionalism. Thanks are offered to all who gave so generously of their time to provide data and advice from the three case study organisations, and from the wider Work Based Learning community of practice. Thanks also to members of Teesside University for help, knowledge and support in matters educational and financial, for without a scholarship this PhD would have remained unwritten; to friends and colleagues who have listened and advised; to extended family for their constant love and encouragement; to all who have given support through life's journey, including: Dillwyn Evans whose skills made walking the journey possible; parents Gordon and Mavis Wilson, who always believed that the journey would be made by whatever path was chosen; sons Alexander and Crispin and their families for their love and laughter; and finally, husband Dr. James Sydney Fisher, for his enduring and unselfish love, constant care and promises kept. Thank you.



## Glossary

**Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL):** an alternative name for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL): please see the definition for APL below.

**Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL):**

This is the process by which an individual learner can obtain academic credits for learning developed from experiences at work or in professional practice. The university assesses the learning by comparing it with similar learning that might have taken place on campus (Durrant, Rhodes & Young, 2009:75).

**Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL):**

“This is the process by which an individual learner can obtain academic credits for learning achieved on formal courses and training (e.g. a HND counting towards a BA degree)” (Durrant, Rhodes & Young, 2009:75).

**Blackboard:** The electronic virtual learning environment available for use as part of the WBL programmes presented by Case Study C.

**Confederation of British Industry (CBI)**

“The CBI is the UK's premier business lobbying organisation, providing a voice for employers at a national and international level”

<http://www.cbi.org.uk/about-the-cbi/> [Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2011].

**Constructivism:** “An ontological position ... that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman, 2008:692).

**Department for Academic Enterprise (DAE)**

The role of the DAE (for case study C) is to support staff across the University to engage with business by developing processes, procedures, systems and customer standards. It is considered as a centralised hub to support employer engagement activities that are diffused throughout the University.

**Employer engagement:** “Essentially, it refers to the collaborative relationship between employers and the HE sector in developing awards that meet both academic needs and the practical needs of the industry.” (dated March, 2008)

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/higherquality/hq26/default.asp#p25> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2010].

**Foundation Degree Forward (Fdf):** an organisation that worked with employers to achieve the DIUS target of 100 000 Foundation Degree graduates by 2010, and to develop new employer-led projects to support employer needs and skills gaps. Fdf

ended 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2011. The web site currently gives access to further information:  
[www.fdf.org.uk](http://www.fdf.org.uk) [accessed 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2011].

**Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE):** supports HEIs to develop proposals making stronger contributions to workforce development and enhanced graduate employability to stimulate provision co-funded by employers and reflecting their future needs; the Sector Skills Councils, as a forum for employers to raise awareness of important skills and productivity needs;

**Higher Education Institution (HEI):** “a university, university college or other institution that has been granted the right to make UK Higher Education Awards by the Privy Council” (Durrant, Rhodes & Young, 2009:76).

**Individual Development Plan: (IDP)** Further information can be found in:  
Doncaster, K. (2000) "Learning agreements: their function in work-based programmes at Middlesex University", Education + Training, Vol. 42 (6) pp.349 – 355.

**Information Communication Technologies: (ICTs)**

“Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are the technologies used in the conveying, manipulation and storage of data by electronic means”

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=397557&section=1.2>  
[accessed 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2011].

**KSA:** “KSA is a consultancy group based in North East England, working in the public, private and voluntary sectors” <http://www.theksapartnership.co.uk/> [accessed 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2011].

**Knowledge Transfer Partnership: KTP**

A KTP involves the formation of a partnership between your business and University, enabling you to access skills and expertise to help your company develop. A recent graduate will facilitate this transfer of knowledge. The graduate works on a strategic project jointly supervised by the University and the business. KTPs are flexible in length from 18 months to three years according to your needs.

[http://www.\[C\].ac.uk/sections/business/knowledge\\_transfer.cfm](http://www.[C].ac.uk/sections/business/knowledge_transfer.cfm) [accessed 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2011].

**Large organisation:** having over 500 employees.

**Learning partnerships:** reciprocal relationships with an intentional focus of learning, with benefit for all members (where a member may represent an organisation and/or self).

**Learning relationship:** a relationship with a focus of learning for some (but not necessarily all) members of the relationship.

**Mode 1:** concerned with theoretical knowledge: to 'know that' (Gibbons *et al*, 1994).

**Mode 2:** concerned with 'how to' knowledge that is passed on or acquired by practical experience, often in a social setting (Gibbons *et al*, 1994).

**Organisational learning:** (within this context) potential for innovation or potential for increased responsiveness to change within an organisation. According to Pedler *et al*. (1991:1): a learning organisation can be defined as: "An organisation that facilitates the learning of all its members *and* continuously transforms itself."

**Organisation culture:** "Organisation culture is the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organisation and with its environment" Seel (2010:2)

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/changeacademy/2010/Amended\\_resources/Seel\\_CultureAndComplexity.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/changeacademy/2010/Amended_resources/Seel_CultureAndComplexity.pdf) [accessed 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2011].

**Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):** "The mission of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world."

[http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en\\_36734052\\_36734103\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_36734052_36734103_1_1_1_1_1,00.html)  
[Accessed 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2011].

**Oxford Internet Institute (OII):** [www.oii.ox.ac.uk](http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk) [Accessed 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2011].

**Paradigm:** According to Seel (2010:3):

A paradigm is a self-consistent set of ideas and beliefs which acts as a filter, influencing how we perceive and how we make sense. The term was brought into common currency by Thomas Kuhn in his famous *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, first published in 1962. Fritjof Capra adapted Kuhn's original definition to present it in a form more suitable to the study of organisations:

A paradigm is a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions and practices shared by a community, which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way a community organises itself (Capra 1997:6).

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/changeacademy/2010/Amended\\_resources/Seel\\_CultureAndComplexity.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/changeacademy/2010/Amended_resources/Seel_CultureAndComplexity.pdf) [accessed 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2011].

## **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA):**

Our job is to uphold quality and standards in UK universities and colleges. We guide and check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in UK higher education, because we want every student to have the best possible learning experience.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx> [Accessed 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2011].

## **Reflection:**

Reflection is a form of mental processing – like a form of thinking – that we use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome. It is applied to relatively complicated or unstructured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and understanding and possibly emotions that we already possess (based on Moon 1999).

Moon J. (2001) 'Reflection in Higher Education Learning' PDP Working Paper 4.

*Learning and Teaching Support Network, Generic Centre*. Exeter: University of Exeter.

**Research Qualification Framework, (RQF):** one of four impact frameworks short-listed by HECFE when developing the UK Research Excellence Framework.

**Sector Skills Councils, (SSC):** a forum for employers to raise awareness of important skills and productivity needs.

**Strategic Development Funding (SDF):** University C successfully bid for a Strategic Development Funding (SDF) £5.13million grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

**University Certificate in Continuing Professional Development (UCCPD):** a University accredited award.

**Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE):** the University senior management team

**Virtual Learning Environment (VLE):** a web based information system to support learning. Case Study C uses Blackboard as its VLE.

**WBL: Work Based Learning** a term that refers to a field of study or a method of study concerned with learning and work, regardless of location, where 'work is the curriculum' (Boud, 1998, cited by Symes & McIntyre(2000:4)) and the learner is usually an experienced professional. More detail is given in Chapter 2.

**Work Based Studies (WBS)** – the programmes that are provided by University C, to differentiate this specific provision from the more generalised term WBL.

**Workforce development (wfd):** a broad term relating to a wide variety of ways of developing the workforce, including WBL.

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# 1 Chapter One: Introduction: setting the scene

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## 1.1 Preface

This research is about the impact of Work Based Learning (WBL) on large organisations. Work Based Learning in this context is considered as learning at higher education (HE) level where the main focus of learning is based upon the learner's own work experience. A large organisation is considered as having at least 500 employees. The research looks at WBL as a specific part of employer engagement with a higher educational institute (HEI). The terms 'university', 'higher educational institute' and the abbreviation 'HEI' are used synonymously throughout this research. Two separate partnerships, each between a University and a large organisation, were set up to meet the needs of the organisations. Partnership executives negotiated appropriate WBL courses at higher education level for experienced employees of the organisation. These employees are called WBL candidates, to distinguish them from traditional University students who tend to follow a fairly direct route from secondary to tertiary education. Two types of knowledge (Gibbons *et al*, 1994): Mode 1 'know that', and Mode 2 'know how', are explained on page 45. The focus of the research is the impact of WBL on large organisations involved in HEI/ employer engagement partnerships. The case studies for this research are a public sector organisation (A), a private sector organisation (B) and the HEI (C), itself a large organisation impacted by its active provision of WBL courses. The partnership organisations are geographically situated in North East England.

## 1.2 Signposts

This chapter sets the scene for this research, before detailed discussion of theoretical models and policy developments in subsequent chapters. Key concepts are given brief working definitions as they arise to avoid confusion over ambiguous terminology and a glossary is provided on page viii. The chapter outlines the main aim of this research, its scope, rationale, potential purpose, context and structure including the stages of the research, the research questions and how they align with the objectives. The importance of the research is considered from the wider perspective, and also from views of people and organisations involved. This chapter concludes with a brief overview of the contents of each chapter to orientate the reader. Policy developments and Work Based Learning are considered in more detail in Chapter Two.

## 1.3 Aim

This research aims to explore the evolving Mode 2 learning relationships between a University and key employer partners to better understand how these WBL relationships impact the organisations.

Previous research (Nixon & KSA, 2008) has confirmed that WBL courses developed through partnership relationships are beneficial, but recommends further investigation. How do these courses impact the organisations concerned? Why and how does someone attending a course make an impact on the organisation itself? Before attempting to measure something, it first has to be identified and defined. This research is looking at what happens to the organisation as a consequence of employees taking a WBL programme, from the perspectives of those involved. These perspectives will provide a greater understanding of how, why and with what consequences WBL, arranged through HEI/ employer engagement partnerships, impacts the organisations involved.

### 1.3.1 Scope

This research, from the standpoint of each organisation will:

- look at employer engagement through HEI/employer engagement partnerships in North East (NE) England;
- consider how the HEI is able to meet the needs of the employer through WBL programmes;
- focus on the WBL of experienced professionals already employed within the work place; and
- investigate the impact of WBL programmes on the learning of the organisation.

The research will not consider initial training for the work place because:

- HEI/employer engagement aims to up-skill employees already in the workforce in response to the lack of sufficiently skilled workers for predicted future demands (Leitch, 2006);
- some management and leadership positions require industry-specific knowledge that makes it difficult to recruit from outside the organisation; and
- WBL is specifically for experienced employees.
- Initial training is mainly about implementing theoretical (Mode 1) knowledge for new professionals under the guidance of experienced professionals, rather than drawing on experientially-gained (Mode 2) knowledge.

The two large organisations selected as case studies represent significant employment sectors within the NE and have successful on-going partnerships with the case study University C.

### **1.3.2 Potential Purpose**

All parties should benefit from a deeper understanding of the learning partnership through robust research. The continuing interactive nature of the researched partnerships should help all members to fine-tune the learning process to maximise their future benefits from WBL. The results of the research will be available for partnership organisations and the WBL community of practice.

The final chapter contains specific findings of how, why and with what consequences WBL, arranged through HEI/employer engagement partnerships has impacted the organisations from the perspectives of participants who understand the workings of their organisations. The results will generate a model to help to focus discussions for developing new partnerships to shorten lead times, with consequent savings of executives' time and organisations' money. The findings from this research and the partnership model will add to the growing body of knowledge of WBL as a field of study to maximise opportunities for social justice, to increase insights into WBL as a relatively new form of HE, and to reveal the impact that WBL can have on large organisations. Information about the University's WBL provision may be used as an initial benchmark for HEI/employer engagement provision by the University for future comparison. The identification by this research of ways in which organisations are impacted may subsequently enable the impacts to be measured by others, both within the context of the University, and the wider WBL community. The findings may not necessarily be apparent in other contexts, but may provide a useful starting point if only to see whether or not they are present. A greater understanding of the impact of WBL on organisations may help to target specific needs and improve standards for other HEIs and organisations considering or consolidating employer engagement.

### **1.3.3 What is Employer Engagement?**

Employer engagement is a term that has a specific meaning within HE, but is essentially a formal partnership between an HEI and an organisation. Through negotiation the HEI will meet some need of the employer by providing expertise that will benefit both organisations. Partnership may produce a number of solutions to problems, such as a research consultancy, or a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), or even brokerage where other experts may be brought in. However, for this research, the engagement is specifically limited to University- endorsed WBL provision that has some academic credit leading to an award. For some partnerships this could be a short bite-sized course, but for the partnerships involved in this research, the programme is more substantial, and leads to a University Certificate in Continuing Professional Development (UCCPD) or a Foundation Degree (FD).

#### **1.3.4 Methodology**

The research is based on three detailed case studies which all embrace change and view partnerships positively. Two large organisations (one public, one private) work in partnership with the University as the third case study which has adapted to accommodate the partnership by providing appropriate programmes. With the complexity of the unprecedented economic climate, major redundancies in the region, and considerable cuts in Government funding, quantitative measures, such as difference to the organisation's turnover *etc.*, would be unlikely to produce meaningful results that could be directly attributed to the impact of learning.

Detailed perspectives of those engaged in the learning process provide qualitative data through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews analysed using a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

The research is undertaken initially with a top-down approach starting with gaining permission through key negotiators. This is followed by semi-structured interviews to seek executives' perceptions of the partnership advantages and intentions. A bottom-up action research approach is taken with course participants, with class observations helping in understanding processes, developing relationships, and opening up communication channels. Knowledge of the candidates and their learning experiences from these observed sessions is used to develop a questionnaire for course participants; their responses then inform the development of semi-structured interview questions for the candidates. More discussion of research methods will be found in Chapter Three.

#### **1.3.5 Impact**

Before gathering data, broad descriptions of impact were considered to alert the researcher to potential impact comments made by interviewees beyond the conventional measures of efficiency or cost. Impact may include sustainability (of workforce as well as environment), happiness, autonomy, creativity, but is likely to be mentioned as change or innovation, which may be taken as a new way of doing or thinking about something. Impact could be re-phrased as 'making a difference' to make the concept easier to understand for participants. The concept of impact is discussed further in Chapter Two.

#### **1.3.6 Rationale**

This research is about adult learning for people who may not have experienced formal education situations for a number of years, if at all. It covers theoretical (Mode 1) learning and also practical (Mode 2) learning; and uses reflection as a means of learning. WBL is used as a mode of study as well as a field of study. Individual motivations are harnessed to encourage autonomy through individualised assignments where the learner can build on what is already known. However, the essence of learning is that it is a transformative process that changes people, and unlocks their potential to achieve more. If this



transformation of the individual can impact the organisation then there may be considerable potential for growth.

This research may help its partnership stakeholders to understand the impact of their HE/employer engagement which may inform future strategic decision-making for these large organisations. This research provides an insight into a small part of the partnership relationship based on the impact of a particular type of negotiated programme. Although WBL may be an initial entry point for discussions between an HEI and a large employer, and may be opportunistic, it raises awareness of the partnership and its potential for future development, and may clarify some reasons for entering it.

The Government agenda of up-skilling the workforce with potential benefit to all in terms of economic recovery within a global knowledge-based economy included the Leitch Report (2006) which intensified a policy-driven promotion of employer engagement with HEIs. More research is required into this phase of HEI/employer engagement to discover the needs and opinions of HEIs and other organisations, and to understand what contributes to a successful learning partnership. This research aims to add to that body of knowledge for the relatively new field of study of WBL and its evolution becoming theorised. The research output and literature on WBL is increasing, but detailed research on WBL within HEIs is required as programmes grow and new personnel, rather than, or in addition to, the original crusaders, carry things forward (Nottingham, 2009). There is potential for the original concepts to be lost, and administrative difficulties escalated with an attempt to upsize WBL provision. This research will contribute to the understanding of how WBL has grown within one HEI.

WBL for experienced professionals potentially provides open access to HE for a new group previously overlooked in the widening access agenda. Walsh (2008:8) explains:

...reference is sometimes made to the need to broaden participation in higher education through providing opportunities for advancement to those workers who are lacking in the educational qualifications that are usually required at some stage in successful professional progression. Such a reference links academic recognition of work-based learning to widening participation.

If workers from an organisation can benefit from this widening access and are motivated to learn, their organisation may also benefit but evidence for this is required through robust research. Learning partnerships between HEIs and organisations appear to have potential for educating each organisation's workforce, and for tailoring provision to meet specific needs of both the individual and the organisation. Linking learning opportunities to individual and organisational learning needs within the context of future economic and technological change is essential to increase the impact of WBL on stakeholders (Sutherland, 2002:109-122). WBL provision may harness candidates' motivations through learning opportunities that meet their current needs and those of their organisation, and

may potentially produce appropriate solutions for future requirements, as yet unknown. This research may provide an understanding of the motivations and needs of the candidates, and the organisation.

Garnett, Comerford and Webb (2003:111) see the potential for WBL programmes challenging the deficit model of HE's M1 knowledge, and instead extending the M2 knowledge that is produced within the work situation:

This has profound long-term implications for the role of the university, transforming it from a monopoly supplier of high-status and privileged knowledge to an active partner with the employer and the student in the creation and application of knowledge within the learning context provided by work.

Nixon & KSA (2006:52) see the challenge as recognising the need for interdependence between HE and industry:

A challenge for the HE sector is in recognising the interdependence of 'industry' and academia in shaping a student's academic abilities and professional competencies. For some this may necessitate a move away from a viewpoint whereby universities are wholly responsible for academic content and industry wholly responsible for competence development.

This research may produce evidence that could contribute to a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1962) by helping organisations understand the benefits of working together to cope with rapid change.

Costley, Abukari and Little (2009:42) note that although essential for informing the successful implementation of WBL, the literature concerning experiences and perspectives of WBL stakeholders is underdeveloped.

The experiences and perspectives of the major stakeholders, such as work-based learning students, tutors and employers, are fundamental elements for the successful delivery and outcome of any work-based learning programme. However, in one sense, the experiences and perspectives of these stakeholders are the most underdeveloped in the literature of employee learning if it is to be considered as a major strand to inform the development, practice and outcome of WBL.

This provides a starting point for this in-depth research into the impact of WBL. Although HE/employer engagement may take a number of formats, this research is predicated on the premise that WBL is an appropriate approach to employer engagement.

WBL is a relatively recent area of study and methodology for learning in HEIs and its transformative learning (Helyer, 2008) for employees has benefits and gains in professional development (Garnett, 2005). If partnership arrangements are based on meeting the specific needs of the employer, then WBL should be mutually beneficial and this research should show how this impacts the organisations involved. Important characteristics of HE/employer partnerships (Naish, 2004) and a preliminary study

confirming the positive impact of WBL learning experiences of employers and employees (Nixon and KSA, 2008) provide firm foundations for this new in-depth research area.

## **1.4 The regional context**

### **1.4.1 The global economy**

The global economy has changed dramatically with all regions, including North East England that has long been at a comparable disadvantage, encountering difficult economic constraints. When people are faced with possible redundancy, it is better to improve skills to increase likelihood of retention or to provide new opportunities for the future (Naish, 2009). Using WBL to transform learners in organisations in ways that are tailored to meet the needs of the organisation potentially offers greater opportunity for organisations to take advantage of new markets. If this learning can move beyond the learners, into the organisation, the organisation may better cope with change; and in times of economic restraint the pressure for change is considerable.

### **1.4.2 NE England as the location of the research**

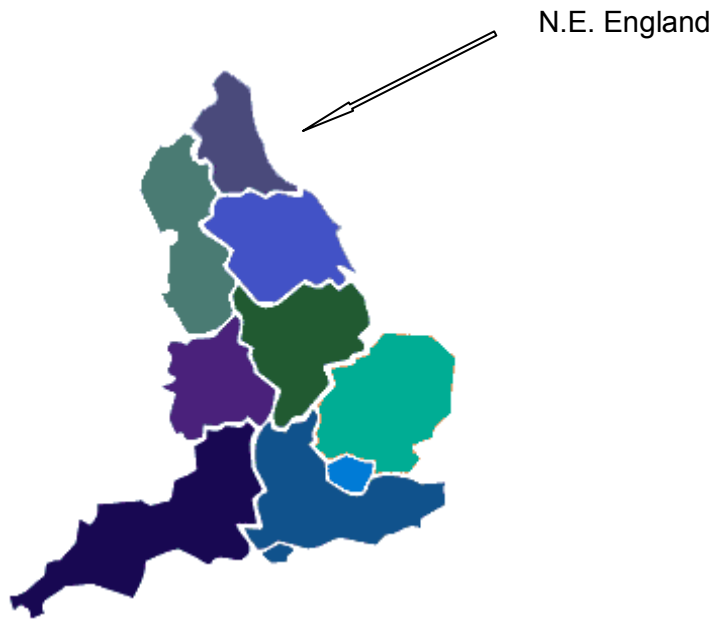
This area of research is of vital importance to NE England with potential to provide social justice opportunities and access to Higher Education that may contribute to future economic and social growth within the region, while advancing the national agenda for World Class Skills. WBL provides opportunities for the University to adapt to changing markets and to be at the leading edge of employer-facing education, nationally and internationally.

North East England is one of the nine Government Office Regions of England which are also European Parliament Constituencies. Regional development Agencies were set up to transform English regions through sustainable economic development. They are expected to end in March 2012. Further information about the North East can be obtained from [www.onenortheast.co.uk](http://www.onenortheast.co.uk) [accessed 27th July, 2009].

### **1.4.3 The NE economy**

The NE had a tradition of manufacturing and engineering based on coal and steel. The region is the base for a fifth of the UK capacity for process industries including 58% of the petrochemical industry and pharmaceuticals. Energy and low-carbon technology worth nearly £1 billion employ 8000 workers and create over £100 000 GVA per head <http://www.northeastengland.co.uk> [accessed 27th July, 2009].

**Figure 1.1: A map of the regions of England**



<http://www.gos.gov.uk/national/> [accessed 27th August, 2009].

#### **1.4.4 The changing economy: a regional focus**

In September 2008 government indicated the challenges of rising commodity prices and tighter credit conditions for all regions, according to their different economies. The North East was already at a comparative disadvantage in terms of employment.

10 September 2008

The global economy is facing unprecedented challenges as the twin impact of tighter credit conditions and increases in global commodity prices mean difficult times for the UK economy in the coming months. However, this will affect each region in different ways in line with the different economies of each region, and regions will need to prepare themselves for a more challenging economic climate

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/economy\\_neast040908.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/economy_neast040908.pdf) [accessed 27th July, 2009].

The global economic crisis was to have a major impact on employment in all regions at the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, the economy of the NE had already seen considerable changes prior to the economic crisis.

In September 2011 the NE had the country's highest economic inactivity rate with one in four people not contributing to the economy. The North East had the highest unemployment rate in the country with 10.7% out of work, with Middlesbrough having the highest rate of unemployment of any local authority in the UK at 14.3%. The region also had the lowest employment rate in the country - 65.9% - with the rate falling significantly in the previous year

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-14919704> [accessed 15th September, 2011].

#### **1.4.5 Change from Traditional to Knowledge-driven /broad-based Industry**

The Financial Times Special Report (Tighe, 2009): 'Doing Business in the North-East of England' considers the regional economy as having moved to a broader base:

Over the past 20 years England's most northerly region has undergone a transformation exploiting science-based activities unheard of a generation ago,

reinventing some of its traditional strengths and dramatically upgrading its urban fabric and riversides. ...

Compared with the recession of the late 1970s when it was still dependent upon the structurally-vulnerable traditional industries, the regional economy is now far more broadly based and knowledge-driven. ...

In 1971, shipbuilding, engineering and steel accounted for 181 000 north-east jobs and employed 28% of its men. By 1986 that had fallen to 58 000 – just 11% of the male workforce. Now the north east has more women in work than men  
<http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/regionalimagestrategy.cfm> [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2009].

Two-and-a-half years later the region was reported as having the highest unemployment rate in the UK:

In September 2011 the NE had the country's highest economic inactivity rate with one in four people not contributing to the economy. The North East had the highest unemployment rate in the country with 10.7% out of work, with Middlesbrough having the highest rate of unemployment of any local authority in the UK at 14.3%. The region also had the lowest employment rate in the country - 65.9% - with the rate falling significantly in the previous year  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-14919704> [accessed 15th September, 2011].

#### **1.4.6 Relevance of this research to NE England**

This area of research is of importance to NE England with potential to provide social justice opportunities and access to Higher Education that may contribute to future economic and social growth within the region.

### **1.5 The stages of the research**

The stages of the research are outlined below. Each section is covered in detail in later chapters, each of which is outlined briefly at the end of this chapter to orientate the reader.

#### **1.5.1 Literature review**

A combination of fieldwork and deskwork was used for the literature review. Information was gathering directly from known experts in the field of WBL through meetings and attendance at conferences, before a full deskwork literature review was undertaken. The initial approach was due to limited availability and scattered locations of academic literature, inconsistencies of terminology and its interpretation (see Appendix 8) and because much of the information relating to WBL could be considered as grey literature. The information gathered established the context and definitions used for this research. Literature is reviewed in Chapter Two which starts with Government policy documents. As the literature review continued throughout the research period, some significant new publications, including the first WBL textbook, were noted.

### **1.5.2 Ontology and epistemology**

The stance taken for this research was a socio-constructivist approach using interpretivism, with socially-constructed reality based on what was known already, through interpretation, which was also socially constructed. This and detailed research methods are discussed further in Chapter Three. The socio-constructivist and interpretivist approach indicated that the data would most likely be qualitative and should be socially constructed and interpreted. This was in keeping with WBL and Mode 2 knowledge that was socially constructed within the workplace, and predicated the use of case studies that could present optimal scenarios

### **1.5.3 Ethics and Integrity**

Courses on ethics and integrity were attended; all necessary permissions were obtained in advance of data collection, and all protocols were followed to ensure the confidentiality of data and identities.

### **1.5.4 Choice of case studies**

Purposive sampling was used to choose three large organisations as case studies to represent public, private and HE sectors that were starting up partnerships. A year into the research it became apparent that the research was at risk because the partnerships were taking much longer to negotiate suitable programmes, and were smaller in scale than originally anticipated. However, the initial discussions were useful in identifying:

- the executives' requirement for
  - sufficient key qualified personnel to ensure the sustainability of the organisation, and
  - value for money / return on investment
- the extensive timescale required to negotiate contracts.

Organisations that already had programmes running with case study C, and which embraced change and viewed partnerships positively, agreed to participate in the research, and this gave an additional dimension because executives were able to provide a reflective account of their involvement, and their perceptions of the impact of the programmes on their employees and their organisation.

### **1.5.5 Choice of respondents**

Purposive sampling was used so that research participants would be able to contribute meaningful data.

### **1.5.6 The main research question**

The main research question (discussed fully in Chapter 3) is

**what is the impact of WBL on the organisations that participate in HEI/Employer Engagement Partnerships?**

Research by Nixon (2008:30) showed that WBL had an impact on organisations, but recommended that further research was required:

... the indicative findings of this study do appear to offer a very good foundation on which to build. So in conducting any further studies in this area it will be important to extend the scope and probe deeper in respect to the impact that studying at an HE level has had on the employee and their employers.

Asking 'what is the impact?' may not provide the depth of answer required, nor the focus on the 'how to' (M2) knowledge of WBL potentially transferring from the individual to the 'how to' knowledge of the organisation. Asking 'how, why and with what consequences?' contextualises the impact, describes it, gives a rationale to explain it and creates and considers dimensions of time and space beyond (and possibly before) the event, without the need to use a name label that might predefine the impact with assumed characteristics without revealing related presumptions. The question was re-written as:

**how, why and with what consequences does the Mode 2 learning of individuals impact the Mode 2 learning of the organisation?**

By taking an inductive approach, the intention was to build new models of what was happening to the organisation as a result of employer engagement based on empirical evidence.

#### **1.5.7 The objectives and their links with the main research question**

The three main objectives for this research were to:

1. give further insight into the impact on organisations of WBL programmes that develop from HEI/employer partnerships;
  - a. the research question focused on the M2 learning of the organisation, and its connection with the M2 learning of the individual.
2. generate a model for new HEI/Employer engagement processes in order to speed up the costly lead time;
  - a. the research question focused on the intended purpose/outcome imagined by the executives, and the correlation with the impacts described by candidates, including profiling of candidates and their motivations for learning.
  - b. the research question also focused on the issues and adaptations either made or required by HE in response to providing WBL programmes.
3. make an original contribution to the knowledge base of WBL as a relatively new field of study.

- a. the research question focused on gaining rich data by providing opportunities for depth and scope of answers from all interviewees.

The first and third objectives could be fulfilled by obtaining data from candidates through the use of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews (Wengraf, 2001). Information about their profiles and their motivations for studying could contribute to the second objective.

The second objective mainly required data from executives and negotiators involved in setting up partnerships and WBL programmes

In order to consider the on-going impact on the HEI semi-structured interviews (SSIs) could be conducted with those involved in delivery, organisation and support of WBL programmes.

Data were generated as responses to research questions.

Initial observations permitted access to the social context before construction of an electronically-delivered questionnaire.

#### **1.5.8 Data required to fulfil the objectives (linked with research questions)**

The use of the questionnaire and SSIs for the candidates could fulfil the first and third objectives.

However, the second objective required an understanding of the executives' perspectives before initiating a partnership. The question that needed to be asked through SSIs was:

##### **what did executives expect WBL programmes to achieve?**

- This is a retrospective future projection of the main research question which could provide a rationale.

In order to set up a new Employer Engagement partnership quickly, it would also be useful to ask:

##### **how was the existing partnership set up?**

- This is an opportunity for gathering rich descriptive data giving context, motives and rationale based on the main research question.

#### **1.5.9 Methodology**

A modified action research approach was taken by observing WBL classes to gain an appreciation of the candidates' experiences of WBL and to develop an initial relationship with the candidates. The observations informed the development of a questionnaire that was relevant to the specific experiences of the candidates.



With the complexity of the unprecedented economic climate that resulted in major redundancies in the region, and considerable cuts in Government funding, it was decided from the outset that usual quantitative measures, such as difference to the organisation's turnover *etc.*, would be unlikely to produce meaningful results that could be directly attributed to the impact of the learning.

The research was undertaken initially with a top-down approach starting with gaining permission through key negotiators. This was followed by semi-structured interviews to seek executives' perceptions of the partnership advantages and intentions. The SSIs were also used to seek perceptions of others who were involved in delivery or administration of programmes.

A bottom-up action research approach was taken with course participants, with class observations helping in understanding processes, developing relationships, and opening up communication channels. Knowledge of the candidates and their learning experiences from these observed sessions was used to develop a questionnaire for course participants; their responses then informed the development of semi-structured interview questions for the candidates. More discussion of research methods will be found in Chapter Three.

#### **1.5.10 Observations**

Observations of candidates participating in WBL programmes informed the writing of a questionnaire to make it relevant to the actual experiences of the candidates for case studies A and B

Former candidates (AA) of the large public organisation initiated their own Action Learning Sets which were also observed.

#### **1.5.11 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire (Appendix 3) was designed to find out the candidates opinions about the WBL course, their motivations for taking the course, the usefulness to themselves as individuals, to their job and to their organisation. It also profiled the candidates and their perceptions of their own type of organisation in contrast with other types of organisations.

The questionnaire was delivered electronically to then current candidates A and B, and to members AA of the Action Learning Set who had already completed the WBL programme.

#### **1.5.12 Semi-structured interviews (SSIs)**

The candidates' questionnaires were followed up with in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Appendix 6).

Other semi-structured interviews (Appendix 5) were also conducted with respondents who were not candidates.

### **1.5.13 Data analysis**

Detailed perspectives of those engaged in the learning process provided qualitative data, that were analysed using a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss 2008). This was also adapted by taking a fractal analysis approach, where the notion of patterns repeating themselves is derived from a nested hierarchical arrangement. This fractal analysis approach is explained in more detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.5.14 Models and thesis writing**

Models were derived from the data analysis and contributed to the final chapters of the thesis which was presented on time at the conclusion of the three year scholarship.

## **1.6 Orientation**

### **1.6.1 Chapter One: Introduction**

This chapter orientates the reader by outlining the topic, rationale and geographical context. It considers the importance of the research, outlines its stages, the research questions and how they align with the objectives before ending with a brief outline of the structure of the thesis.

### **1.6.2 Chapter Two: Literature Review**

The second chapter covers literature and viewpoints of WBL practitioners that are relevant to the research. It starts with Government policy before entering the definitional debates around WBL, impact, epistemology/pedagogy and organisational learning. It includes learning related concepts, such as language and motivation. It does not consider literature concerned with research methodology, data collection and analysis because these are discussed later.

### **1.6.3 Chapter Three: Methodology**

Chapter Three covers the theory and the rationale for the choice of research methods. It includes literature associated with collection and analysis of the qualitative data including Fractal Concept Analysis.

### **1.6.4 Chapter Four: Data Collection and Analysis for case studies A and B.**

This chapter outlines the three case studies and the stakeholders involved in WBL partnerships. It gives detail about the data, their sources, and the practicalities of data collection. Data is analysed for case studies A and B. Executives' requirements and candidates' perceptions of impacts are compared.

### **1.6.5 Chapter Five: Data Collection and Analysis for case study C**

This chapter gives the analysis of data from the perspectives of the HEI, case study C. Comparisons are made with the models from the previous chapter. It includes a section on the Courtyard Model with some discussion on different kinds of knowledge.

### **1.6.6 Chapter Six: Findings and Conclusions**

This chapter summarises the results of the research, and presents models derived from these results. A self-reflective examination of the methodology used and its limitations are presented. Policy implications of the research are discussed before the original contribution of the research is summarised.

### **1.6.7 References**

This section provides references used within the thesis.

### **1.6.8 Appendices**

Material of relevance to the research but not covered in the main chapters is included in this section. Please see the Table of Contents (page ii) for further details.

## **1.7 Summary**

This chapter has set the scene for this research by introducing key concepts, outlining the main aim, rationale, intended purpose, scope and structure, as well as the stages of the research, the research questions and how they align with the objectives. The importance of the research was considered, as was its geographical location, and a brief overview each chapter was given to orientate the reader. Policy Developments and Work Based Learning are considered in more detail in Chapter Two.

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## 2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

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### 2.1 Signposts

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature relevant to this research; to critique that literature to illustrate its relevance to the research undertaken. Additionally, it serves to both contextualise and define the research in terms of current knowledge and to show how the findings may contribute to that growing body of knowledge.

With WBL being a relatively new field of study, the approach to this literature review has included attending national and international conferences, and talking to acknowledged experts with writings at the forefront of the field, including first wave WBL pioneers. There can be few fields where during the first six months of study a student can have spoken to a dozen key authors. This approach has led to specialist WBL literature, and up-to-date views of the field. University workshops, lectures, conferences and various learning and teaching events have provided a wealth of additional perspectives.

The review has been on-going throughout the research, with the growth in literature including specifically written textbooks for WBL students and a new Emerald journal. The Higher Education Academy's frequently updated website has been an excellent source of information, although the search facility sometimes misses key HE Academy literature.

The chapter starts with the Policy context before engaging with the important definitional debates around WBL, impact, epistemology/pedagogy and organisational learning. The chapter concludes with previous research of particular relevance to this study, and the way that this thesis addresses some of the identified gaps in the field of WBL. Literature concerned with the methodology, collection and analysis of data is considered in chapter three.

### 2.2 Work Based Learning and the link with Government Policy

Government has long been associated with the up-skilling of workers in order to increase employment opportunities.

#### 2.2.1 A WBL timeframe

The time framework for this review contextualises WBL within living memory of those still in the workforce and could be compared with the development of a new plant. The first

phase (germination) shows the initial development of characteristics of WBL as Government policy moves towards the massification of higher education and the corresponding emphasis on qualifications from about 1971, coinciding with the start of the Open University. The second phase (seedling) starts in 1992 when WBL is transplanted from FE and Polytechnics to Universities and HE. The third phase (growth) starts with the twenty-first Century, and establishes definitions and debates through WBL publications (including Portwood's landmark SEDA 109 paper on WBL as a subject) as Government raises the issue of world class skills, and ends with the 2006 Leitch Review. The fourth phase (flowering) attracts attention, and considers WBL post Leitch. The future will reveal the type and extent of fruit that may be harvested.

### **2.2.2 Phase One: c.1971-1992**

Learning and skills have always been part of formal education. In the UK, institutions evolved for different purposes and different clientele. During the 1970s academic knowledge was the domain of the university, and skills with practical applications were the domain of the polytechnic. The tripartite system introduced after the 1944 (R. A. Butler) Education Act <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/1944?title=education%20Act> [viewed 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2011] included technical schools as a strategic route to the polytechnic for those with obvious practical abilities. In 1973 the school leaving age was raised from 15 to 16. Comprehensive schools had replaced technical schools, secondary modern schools and some grammar schools, as part of an egalitarian push by Government to increase access to HE. Colleges of Education were moving to four-year Bachelor of Education degrees. The new Open University offered long, but accessible pathways to a degree for those previously denied HE opportunities. Technical colleges, often conduits to polytechnics, were re-designated as Colleges of Further Education, and offered a wider range of employment-related courses.

These structural changes in educational provision promoting increased access to education were accompanied by Government policy pushing for economic expansion through vocational education and training (VET). Britain joined the European Economic Community. The European Social Fund (ESF) funded the Core Skills Project, which led to the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and Training Agency (TA) FE WBL Projects of the 1980s. "*A Guide to Work Based Learning Terms*" (Levy *et al*, 1989) acknowledged eight years of contributors to the FE Staff College, Bristol, including National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). The first section of the book outlines the aims of VET:

Changes in the economy, the problem of unemployment... complaints of skills shortages and falling standards have all been issues at the heart of recent changes in vocational education and training (VET) provision. The Great Debate in the 1970s ... gave rise in 1981 to the New Training Initiative (NTI) ... NTI has been influencing the aims and objectives found in education and training programmes and in employers' staff training and development processes.

This handbook of WBL terms (Levy *et al*, 1989) developed from Government funded projects during the 1980s provides definitions indicating that the current format of WBL, including use of a portfolio with opportunities for reflection was already shaping. However, the learning was at Further Education, rather than Higher Education levels.

A history of WBL and its relationship with Government requirements for employment is covered in detail by Rumbelow (2006). She notes (p. 20) that the 1986 Review of Vocational Qualifications chaired by De Ville (MSC/DES 1986) led to the development of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system to develop standards in vocational qualifications and to reduce inequalities; and even suggested removing the academic /vocational qualification divide:

In formalising vocational qualifications and trying to bring them alongside academic qualifications, giving them a parallel currency, attempts were being made to reduce labour market inequalities (Williams and Raggatt, 1998). This was stated as key motivation of the Review carried out by De Ville:

‘The artificial divide between so-called academic and so-called vocational qualifications is unhelpful and obstructive and should be bridged’ (MSC/DES 1986:8).

### **2.2.3 Phase Two: c.1992 – 1999**

The Further and Higher Education Act 1992

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/13/contents> [accessed 19th April, 2010]

established the Higher Education Funding Council for England (Section 62, p.46) and permitted the use of ‘University’ (Section 77, p.61) in the name of institutions which met certain conditions. The transition of WBL into Higher Education started in 1992 with the status change of Polytechnics to Universities. Polytechnics had a long history of educational provision for raising qualification levels through relationships with employers. “University Work-based Learning in the UK developed from a range of Employment Department funded initiatives in the early 1990s” (Garnett, 2009a:21). At Middlesex this started with a project “to identify the possibility of identifying and accrediting a ‘curriculum in the workplace’.” (House, in Garnett *et al*, 2009: Foreword).

Individuals were able to gain credit for learning outside the formal system of education and training in parallel with the introduction of system of National Standards in vocational training and a modular credit system in Higher Education (Konrad, 2001). Employers were encouraged to support their employees to gain qualifications and recognition of their skills through Accreditation of Prior Learning to develop "Learning Organisations" which were recognised through a National Quality Assurance Standard *Investors in People* introduced by Government in 1991

The 1997 Dearing Report: *Higher Education in the Learning Society* was a series of reports related to an inquiry into the funding of Higher Education. It recommended student contributions; expansion in student numbers; more support for part-time students; adequate infrastructure for higher education; proper funding for research; improved maintenance support for students and increased higher education pay in line with average earnings.

The Dearing Inquiry saw student and employer demand as the main determinant of the level of participation in higher education, with funding following the student. In order to address the underrepresentation of certain groups, the Inquiry recommended a range of measures including prioritised funding allocations to institutions committed to widening participation with a strategy to do so; and enrolling students from disadvantaged areas.

It also recommended that institutions developed programme specifications for each course to outline intended outcomes of the course and stopping-off points; and changes to the remit of the Quality Assurance Agency that gave responsibility for quality assurance, maintenance of the qualifications framework, and arrangements for institutions to adopt a code of practice by 2001/02.

#### **2.2.4 Phase Three: c.2000 – 2006.**

This phase, with an increasing awareness of the need for skills and innovation, marks an expansion in opportunities for universities to engage with Business to offer WBL programmes.

In 2000, the European Commission set out the Lisbon Strategy for economic growth and employment. due to concerns about declining productivity and an aging population, It intended to make Europe “the most competitive and the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” by 2010 (Webb, 2009:3) by addressing the long-term supply side of skills and innovation. The Strategy was not being taken up quickly enough so was re-launched in 2005 to boost the growth of both economy and employment. Countries were expected to report on a three year cycle

<http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/briefings/snep-03404.pdf> [accessed 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2011].

In 2000 the UK Department for Education and Employment announced the new award of Foundation Degree, which included a focus on higher level skills and working with employers. Reducing the skills gap would reduce social exclusion, as noted in the OECD Policy Brief ‘Economic Survey of the United Kingdom 2000’ Summary of June 2000.

Apart from financial disincentives, matching jobs and people is hindered in some sectors and regions by inadequate skill levels, including as regards basic literacy and numeracy. The skills gap, which constitutes one of the major drivers of social exclusion, can only be bridged over the long haul  
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/21/39/1816843.pdf> [accessed 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2010].

Regional Learning and Skills Councils were established in 2000 under the Learning and Skills Act 2000. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/21/notes/division/2> [accessed 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2010].

Two Department for Education and Science (DfES) reports: 'The Future of Higher Education' (2003) and 'Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners' (2004) stressed the need for higher level knowledge and WBL opportunities.

The 2003 Final Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration stated (p.12):

In recent years, the UK Government has increased the resources available to universities to fund their research, and has also provided a growing volume of funding specifically designed to encourage collaboration between universities and business – the so-called third stream activity which follows on from the two priorities of teaching and research. The questions for this Review are about what more should be done to support an increasing volume of such collaboration, and about what benefits these efforts can be expected to generate for business, the universities and, more generally, the public interest.

The knowledge economy concept and the pressure from the EU's Lisbon Strategy undoubtedly influenced the Lambert Review which promoted strengthening links between employers and universities to help shape graduate skills and knowledge, with universities needing to produce graduates with workplace skills to add immediate value to business, and to be more employable. The vital role of high level skills for global competitiveness was of international concern, but little action indicated that the Review was far from influential.

The DfES (2004) estimated that HEIs account for about £300 million of perhaps £5 billion spent annually by organisations on training and development at time of the report, which gives much potential for a growing market. This highlights the working of the knowledge economy: by knowing that money is available for training purposes, businesses can be enticed to spend more of that money with HEIs, if the product is right. Government would be able to reduce HE funding if business increased its contributions to HE.

In 2004 Government guidance was issued for degree-awarding powers and university title for institutions in England and Wales

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/higher-education/docs/a/11-781-applications-for-degree-awarding-powers-guidance> [accessed 12th December, 2011].

The 2005 OECD summary noted that skills shortages were preventing innovations, and suggested increasing funding to universities working with businesses.

In line with the recommendation of the *Lambert Review*, consideration should also be given to increasing the funding for those universities that have shown a track record of successful collaboration with businesses, which are not always the same universities that appear at the top of the academic rankings determining the bulk of university funding  
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/18/34/35473312.pdf> [accessed 26/08/10].



In 2006 the Leitch Review of Skills placed considerable emphasis on the importance of high level skills for the UK to become a world class player in a global economy. This parallels the 2006 Australian Industry Group report "World Class Skills for World Class Industries" where 85% of the 500 businesses surveyed in Australia agreed that "our future global competitiveness is built around skills"

<http://www.aigroup.com.au/policy/reports/archive06> [accessed 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009].

The Leitch Review (2006) called for a demand-led skill system with the aim of 40% of adults qualified to Level 4 or higher by 2020, compared with 29% in 2005 so that the UK could be in the top eight (worldwide) for each skill level. This review clearly brought qualifications for work into the HE sector since Level 4 criteria, by definition, were firmly within the HE remit (QAA, 2008:15). The review also confirmed the UK's compliance with the European Union (EU) Bologna Process, as outlined by Ministers responsible for HE in countries participating in the Bologna Process, Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, April 2009:

"In the decade up to 2020 European higher education has a vital contribution to make in realising a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative... Europe can only succeed in this endeavour if it maximises the talents and capacities of all its citizens and fully engages in lifelong learning as well as in widening participation in higher education"

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/> [Accessed 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2011].

The Leitch Report (December, 2006) states (p.1) "Today, over 70 per cent of our 2020 workforce have already completed their compulsory education."

#### **2.2.5 Phase Four: c.2007-2011.**

The OECD 2007 Summary <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/49/34/39384976.pdf> [accessed 26<sup>th</sup> August, 2010] indicated that raising workforce skill levels could increase innovation and productivity. Government would fund 'training' for the most disadvantaged, although private investment was also required.

More broadly, innovation and productivity can be supported by raising the general skill level of the workforce. Workforce skill levels do not compare well with those of the best performing countries. The UK government has plans to address this including through publicly-funded adult training that focuses on the most disadvantaged groups, which currently receive little training. Greater private investment in training is needed as well, in order to raise skills at all levels

[http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34111\\_34290432\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_2649_34111_34290432_1_1_1_1,00.html) [accessed 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2010].

The Leitch Review acted as a catalyst that provided a coherent focus on HE contributing to the development of higher level skills for employment. Wedgwood (2008:4) identified the need for a step change:

The HE sector must do its business of teaching and learning significantly differently if it is to achieve a step change in the delivery of higher education to the workforce market that is recommended in the Leitch Report.

The Leitch Review, by highlighting the importance of high level skills for a knowledge economy, also changed the focus to a demand-led system which removed some responsibility, and cost, from Government to organisations and individuals.

Although lacking precise data, CBI evidence showed that 64% of companies with 5000 plus employees had used a HEI for training, compared to only 1% with less than 50 employees. Wedgwood (2008:12) reported:

The policy area of 'employer engagement' is essentially about building a critical mass of capability and confidence in the HE sector - quickly and effectively so that more institutions treat this agenda as mission critical and more employers and employees commit to higher education.

According to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in their March 2008 news article, Quick guide to... employer engagement in England:

'Employer engagement' is a term often used in the HE sector [...]. Essentially, it refers to the collaborative relationship between employers and the HE sector in developing awards that meet both academic needs and the practical needs of the industry. Although institutions are already involved extensively with employers, there is potential for the HE sector to build more effective relationships with them to maximise the benefits for learners, employers and employees  
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/higherquality/hq26/default.asp#p25> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2010].

The same QAA article noted the key players in Employer Engagement including:

- QAA, to ensure standards;
- The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DIUS): increasing employer co-funding for skill development, following the Leitch Review of Skills (2006);
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), supporting HEIs to develop proposals making stronger contributions to workforce development and enhanced graduate employability to stimulate provision co-funded by employers and reflecting their future needs;
- Foundation Degree Forward (fdf) working with employers to achieve the DIUS target of 100 000 Foundation Degree graduates by 2010, and developing new employer-led projects to support employer needs and skills gaps;
- Sector Skills Councils, (SSC) as a forum for employers to raise awareness of important skills and productivity needs; and
- HEIs to develop awards to meet the practical needs of employers and national academic expectations according to the Academic Infrastructure (to be replaced by the Quality Code from the beginning of the 2012 academic year)

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Pages/default.aspx> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011].

In July 2007 *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England* set out how the Government would implement Lord Leitch's recommendations in England. A new UK Commission on Employment and Skills (UKCES) was announced to

- report on skills and employment strategies and targets;
- assess progress for world-class ambition;
- integrate employment and skills services for individuals and employers; and
- oversee the performance and reform of the SSCs.
  - raising employer ambition and investment in skills at all levels;
  - articulating the future skill needs of their sector; and
  - ensuring that the supply of skills and qualifications is driven by employers.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), would

- support projects in HEIs to develop employer engagement;
- fund 5,000 additional places in 2008-09, co-funded with employers.
- The higher education (HE) sector's focus on workforce development would be increased and
- HE institutions would be encouraged to collaborate with employers in delivering training to meet employers' needs.

HEFCE, as part of its role of supporting HEIs in workforce development provision and encouraging employer engagement, awarded Strategic Development Funding to a number of universities, including case study C. This is of major significance to this research because the substantial sum has enabled University C to develop infrastructure relevant to WBL provision, and this will be discussed at various points throughout this thesis.

The OECD Employment Outlook 2010 presented statistical information about changes of employment according to the skill levels of workers. In the UK, those with high skills gained considerably, whereas those without high skills were put at considerable disadvantage. This dramatic variation according to skill level presents strong evidence for the need to up-skill workers, and the advantage of doing so. The report states:

Youth and low skilled workers have been particularly affected by the deteriorating labour market in the United Kingdom. .... Employment losses have also been concentrated among the low-skilled and medium-skilled workers

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/14/35/45603124.pdf> [accessed 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2010].

In October 2010 the Department of Business, Innovations and Skills published guidance documentation on foundation degree-awarding powers for FE

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/higher-education/docs/a/11-782-applications-for-foundation-degree-awarding-powers-guidance> [Accessed 12th December, 2011].

The Browne Review: *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education* (October, 2010)

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/docs/s/10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf> [Accessed 11th November, 2010] was a fore-runner

to the White Paper to be published the following year. It announced student fees to be determined by, and paid directly to the HEI, thus making the student a consumer. Student loans and living costs became more accessible, but were to be repaid once the graduate's income exceeded £21000 p.a. and could potentially burden graduates for up to 30 years. This may reduce further the number of traditional undergraduate students which were declining because of changing demographics, in which case, WBL may become even more important as an income stream for HEIs.

The Browne Review made funding available for part-time students, which, in theory, may enable low paid workers to take a self-funded HE WBL course. For this research, the Employers paid their employees' fees under a co-contribution scheme. In future years this subsidy will no longer be an option for employers.

The White Paper, *Students at the heart of the system* (2011:4) outlines Government's three challenges for HE reform:

- First, putting higher education on a sustainable footing ...
- Second, institutions must deliver a better student experience; improving teaching, assessment, feedback and preparation for the world of work.
- Third, they must take more responsibility for increasing social mobility.

The White Paper states (5.27p.61)

For the first time, students starting part-time undergraduate courses in 2012/13, many of whom are from non-traditional backgrounds, will be entitled to an up-front loan to meet their tuition costs so long as they are studying at an intensity of at least 25 per cent, in each academic year, of a full-time course. This is a major step in terms of opening up access to higher education, and remedies a long-standing injustice in support for adult learners. Up to around 175,000 part-time students will benefit. Under the new system, distance learning students studying full-time will also benefit from a loan to cover their tuition costs  
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/higher-education/docs/h/11-944-higher-education-students-at-heart-of-system.pdf> [accessed 12th December, 2011].

Although this continues the notion of student as consumer, options are available for those wishing to study part-time to access funding, although it remains to be seen if this option will be taken up. Putting the controversial issue of funding aside, this paper shows that WBL is likely to be of increasing, rather than decreasing importance to HE. This is evidenced (3.29 p.39) by the following statement:

We want our universities to look again at how they work with business, across their teaching and research activities, to promote better teaching, employer sponsorship, innovation and enterprise. We have asked Professor Sir Tim Wilson, former vice-chancellor of the University of Hertfordshire and HEFCE board member, to undertake a review into how we make the UK the best place in the world for university-industry collaboration, which will inform the Government's research and innovation strategy....

The promised Wilson Review had not been published at the time of submission of this thesis.

The post-Leitch situation is summed up by Whitemore, Young and Minton (2011):

Tolleyfield (2008), presenting to the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) Conference, makes the point that the strategic challenge set for higher education in responding to Leitch remains to develop:

*...an economy of explicit business driven demands for high skills from employers...met by responsive, flexible, results-focused provision delivered by highly adaptive HE providers.*

While the requirement for the UK to remain internationally competitive is the policy imperative and an increase in higher level skills in the workplace is seen as the way to achieve this, there remains a question of resource. A key driver of the implementation of policy is to shift costs away from the state alone to a shared responsibility between the state, the employer and the employee.

This indicates the need for evidence of the impact of WBL on organisations, and the motivations and profiles of employees who have opted to become WBL candidates.

## 2.3 Work Based Learning

Work Based Learning is a contested area of learning that is as perplexing as it is simple; as confusing as it is enlightening; as old as it is new. Before these ideas are discussed, expert definitions and views of Work Based Learning are presented.

### 2.3.1 WBL: a definition from Boud, Solomon and Symes

The term WBL is defined by Boud, Solomon and Symes (2001: 4) as “being used to describe a class of university programmes that bring together universities and work organizations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces”.

They consider that WBL programmes share six characteristics:

- a partnership between an external organisation and an educational institution is specifically established to foster learning;
- learners involved are employees of, or are in some contractual relationship with an external organisation;
- the programme derives from the needs of the workplace and the learner rather than being controlled by the disciplinary curriculum because work is the curriculum;
- the start of the programme and educational level is established after learners have engaged in a process of recognition of competencies and identification of learning needs rather than relying on educational qualifications;
- a major element of WBL is that learning projects are undertaken in the workplace; and finally
- the educational institution assesses the learning outcomes of the negotiated programmes (with reference to a framework of standards and levels which are transdisciplinary).

This follows on from earlier debates by the same academics in *Working Knowledge: The New Vocationalism and Higher Education* (Symes and McIntyre, 2000).

Boud and Symes (2000:21) argue:

...work based learning is a radical approach to university education in which students undertake study for a degree or diploma through activities conducted primarily in their workplace and in topic areas which may have no immediate equivalence to university subjects.

They continue (p. 23-4):

One of the on-going problems relating to work based learning concerns the matter of proprietorship and ownership. In the traditional university courses were owned by the academy, which defined the parameters of assessment, determined who taught the course, and in what manner and with what course materials. In work based learning these issues are more amorphous and therefore more subject to contestation and debate.

Solomon and McIntyre note (2000:118-9):

The partnerships of organisations, the worker/learner and higher education institutions make this a complex and contested form of surveillance and regulation.

... Learners ... are subject to multiple levels of surveillance – from management in relation to performance agreements and learning programmes and from academics in their role as assessors of learning.

Tennant (2000:123) comments: "...universities are increasingly under scrutiny to provide education that is more relevant and pertinent to the needs of employers."

### **2.3.2 Portwood's intellectual case for WBL as a subject discipline**

Although Portwood considered WBL to be in its infancy, and that, with a small research portfolio, claims for subject status must be taken on trust, he stated that WBL:

...re-draws the epistemological map of higher education because the boundaries of disciplines are at most partly relevant to the spread of knowledge workers need in their work roles within an organisational setting.

Portwood (2000:18) argued the intellectual case for WBL as a subject discipline that comes '...primarily from examining the concept of the learned worker, which is understood as a combination of intelligent scepticism and focused intelligence.' Intelligent scepticism '...questions taken-for-grantedness through exposing and challenging assumptions and examining alternatives. It highlights the contradictions and paradoxes in our ideas and systems' (Portwood, 2000: 19) which is critical to the purposes of higher education. He argues that focused intelligence is the intelligence of an expert; an attribute of an individual learned worker; invariably has a team-working focus and is market orientated because it needs to grasp chances and increase its specialism.

The quality of focused intelligence is thereby gauged by the fitness for purpose of its products whose production has involved collaborative activity. Consequently current interest in the development of transferable skills is a reinterpretation and broader appreciation of what is involved in focused intelligence. Nonetheless, it remains closely bonded to and bounded by its related academic discipline especially when the expertise is controlled by a licensing authority and/or professional body Portwood (2000:20).

### **2.3.3 WBL is perplexing because it is misunderstood**

WBL is perplexing because it is misunderstood by some as being of lesser value than traditional disciplines of knowledge (Critten, 2007:50-58). Lester and Costley (2010:569) explain:

The third stream mistakenly equates all work-based learning with 'training' and with employer-led courses that lack wider relevance or academic rigour, sometimes viewing it as a commercially-driven exercise to increase student numbers at the expense of quality.

Traditional views tend to prevail. Anything to do with work was traditionally thought of as 'vocational education' and was associated with lower level training. Skills for applying knowledge, even if gained through university, were associated with work, and therefore with vocational education. Banim (2009:6) explains the view of some in HEIs:

For some people working in HE, the acquisition and demonstration of pure knowledge (a relevant theoretical base) and critical thinking skills about that knowledge constitute the very essence of 'graduateness'. Following on from that, the acquisition and demonstration of the skills necessary to apply that knowledge in 'real settings' occurs after graduation and so is not the business of the University (see Walsh, 2008 for a fuller discussion).

WBL is a social justice vehicle providing a means of bridging the divide between skill levels, which reflect work opportunities and income levels. Although WBL and up-skilling workers were on the political agenda constantly throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, the progress was far from rapid. Reeve and Gallacher (2003:202) noted: "It would seem that WBL developments within universities in the UK are still limited and marginal". Nixon and KSA (2006:16) commented: "Perceptions of work-based learning show that it is still seen by some as belonging to more vocationally oriented institutions", which may have been part of the reluctance to progress in HE despite WBL programmes that up-skill employees facilitating insider participant research and providing effective and efficient ways of improving the workplace.

However, the split between education and training is increasingly viewed within HEIs as false. Banim (2009:6) refers to Beckett and Hager (2002) when she disputes that learning to do with work is a form of training based on behaviouristic skills that benefit the employer rather than being a pursuit of knowledge, so does not belong in universities.

Increasingly though more people working in HE are taking the view that the split between education and training is entirely false. They argue that universities are not the sole generators of owners of knowledge that can be passed onto students. Rather people in the workplace generate knowledge through work. Further, they argue that the application and demonstration of higher level skills is an integral part of learning (see Walsh, [2008] and Willis, 2008). Therefore there needs to be more emphasis on programmes being 'learner-driven' – recognising what students bring to the learning process.

#### **2.3.4 WBL is based upon a simple concept**

The elegantly simple concept of “work is the curriculum” (Boud & Solomon, 2000:13) encompasses infinite possibilities. When this is achieved through ‘open shell’ courses, where the content is negotiated around the learner’s individual work within the workplace, the concept is so simple that some mistake it as being ‘easy’. However “reflection is required to bring the inherent tacit knowledge of experience to the surface. It thus contributes to the reconstruction of meaning” (Raelin, 1997:563).

WBL focuses on learning through the actual activities of work (Eraut, 2004). It enhances projects that are a part of working life by drawing on research methodology and incorporating research techniques into the projects, as part of the associated learning activities, to answer questions that participants set for themselves, and that are of relevance to their particular workplace. Research methods and reflection enable participants to make explicit some of the implicit or tacit knowledge of the workplace (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995) that can then be shared with others. Walsh (2008:11) defines this ‘Mode 2 knowledge’ (Gibbons *et al*, 1994) as ‘knowledge that is produced outside the university in the context in which it will be used’.

According to Armsby (2000 p36):

It can be argued that using research methodologies links practical work based knowledge with theoretical knowledge. ...In summary, research and development in work based learning aids the development and use of an ‘academic’ and theoretical perspective in projects undertaken at work.

The results for the participants are high levels of:

- motivation because tasks are relevant (Harvey, 2009:45);
- satisfaction, with new skills and knowledge adding to successful strategies; and
- confidence (Moore, 2009:80) sometimes acknowledged by senior staff.

With work being the focus of study, additional time, thought and effort may go into the projects, but Avis (2010:15) questions some underlying assumptions:

Whilst for many workers this may offer more fulfilling work and greater levels of autonomy, it may also contribute to increased self-surveillance whereby we are enjoined to continually re-invent ourselves to fit the demands of the productive system thereby developing “useful knowledge”.

Issues of Foucauldian power and the ethics of work may spring to mind in terms of potential exploitation of the worker, however, it would seem that those involved in this research are willing volunteers who are highly motivated: some see opportunities for doing more as liberating, rather than as being exploited.



### **2.3.5 WBL is confusing**

Various interpretations of diverse terminology describing what has evolved as both a method and a field of study in a relatively short space of time are confusing. Costley and Armsby (2007:21-33) indicate that inappropriate assessment can undermine learning if WBL is used as a mode of learning without acknowledging work-related knowledge, or where as a field of learning it is assessed through methods associated with disciplinary knowledge. Garnett (2007:24) states that: “WBL as a field or mode of study requires the institution to have regulations and procedures in place to identify, assess and accredit learning not provided by the HEI”. Lester and Costley (2010:570) describe recent developments:

A set of principles and practices has emerged that can be regarded as marking out work-based learning as a distinct field of activity within universities, rather than purely as a mode of learning within disciplinary or professional fields. These are backed by a developing area of scholarship that has begun to theorise work-based learning as a field of study in its own right, juxtaposed with the more established view of it as a mode of learning within an academic or professional discipline.

### **2.3.6 WBL is enlightening**

WBL is enlightening because it can have a transformative effect on those who engage with it. Young and Garnett (2007:5) explain:

Learning in higher education is not a straightforward process of knowledge transmission, a commodity to be parcelled up by providers and presented to learners. Rather it is a process of change and transformation for those involved.

Tallantyre (2008a:4) highlights the spreading influence of such transformation: “Good education is transformative, not simply for learners themselves, but for those who come in contact with them”.

WBL is a complex concept that can mean many things to different people. Essentially it is concerned with the professional development of those with experience of work and uses that experience, together with current work, as the focus of their learning. Learners engage professionally and socially within the context of learning (Billett, 2002). Through reflection the implicit can be made explicit, and can then be shared and re-contextualised in terms of existing theory. Work Based Learning generates new work-related knowledge within its context of application and may also generate new theory. As Bellamy (2009:97) indicates:

What is of value in WBL is the way in which its elements combine, in what is essentially a ‘framework’ approach to knowledge making, that enables tacit learning to emerge in a system that is supported by a critical thinking design built into the curricula programme in order to facilitate a reflexive knowledge-claim.

### 2.3.7 WBL is as old as it is new

WBL is old because it originates from traditional ways of learning by doing, and sharing with others that transcends the histories of all cultures. It is new because it has been adopted as a means of formal learning by UK higher educational institutions since the early 1990s, as Portwood (2000:109) relates:

Work based learning emerged in the 1990s when British universities were preoccupied with proving that they were both local and global institutions. The latter was particularly important because diminishing government funding impelled them to diversify their budgets.

WBL has its origins within all cultures in that learning is handed on from one generation to the next by showing and sharing how things are done; often in a tacit way; frequently with little in terms of explanation. When learning takes place within a formal structure, standards are applied and a more consistent result should follow, and when the implicit is made explicit, the learning moves to a higher level. Tallantyre (2008a:4) explicates the advantages of higher level skills:

There will be an emphasis upon those higher level skills that embody the essence of higher education – for example, reflection, analysis, problem solving, creativity, evaluation, and an open-endedness about what emerges from the learning.

## 2.4 WBL and the confusion of language

There are three points to be made about language. The first is that until there is some common meaning of a word that has been accepted by all there will be confusion. This was initially the case with concepts related to WBL. The second point is that use of unfamiliar language can make people feel excluded. This can prevent access to Higher Education, or can restrict understanding, or even building of new relationships. The third point is that familiarity with difficult concepts means that jargon or abbreviations will be used by experts who easily forget that that their understanding is not experienced by everyone.

WBL, as with anything new (e.g. “Women’s Studies”) that develops in different places in a short space of time, has different meanings or concepts associated with specific vocabulary, and also different words used to mean the same thing. Winch (1970: 11) summarises this complex issue eloquently:

Philosophical issues do, to a large extent, turn on the correct use of certain linguistic expressions; the elucidation of a concept is, to a large extent, the clearing up of linguistic confusions.

The language we use shapes our concepts, and our concepts shape our understanding of the world. Winch (1970:13) continues:

Our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use. The concepts we have settle for us the form of the experience we have of

the world. ... The world *is* for us what is presented through those concepts. That is not to say that our concepts may not change; but when they do, that means that our concept of the world has changed too.

It is important to consider the appropriate use of language when talking to people who have different experiences of the world. University academics frequently use terminology, abbreviations and acronyms that are helpful in a specialist environment. However, many academic conversations can be confusing for anyone who is not an expert in that field.

Precise terminology needs to be precise, especially if it is to be shared with others, either within the Work Based Learning community, or within and between universities and business organisations. The meaning of 'a portfolio' to an artist may be very different from the meaning (and expectations) of 'a portfolio' to a Work Based Learning lecturer and a portfolio of evidence may mean something entirely different again to a member of the police force (Fisher, 2010:40).

Use of unfamiliar language and acronyms can be interpreted as a way of excluding people (Bernstein, 1962). Use of technical language was an initial difficulty with access to computers; similarly, careless use of language may prevent access to universities, or may create unnecessary barriers to understanding, or to building new relationships.

Bernstein's work (1962) on received speech, and formal use of language was revolutionary in its day because it revealed that social class determined the codes of language used, which formed barriers that excluded people. The exclusion noted by Bernstein, and the shaping of understanding described by Winch combine to emphasise the potential differences between use of language in universities and industry which can lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. People may not hold the same concepts which may inhibit communication. Successful partnerships between HEIs and employers depend on good communications. Candidates require a common understanding of language for learning. If WBL is to be considered as a field of study HEIs need a shared understanding of the concepts involved through a commonality of use of language.

#### **2.4.1 The term 'Work Based Learning'**

All specialised fields of knowledge have a distinctive, unique vocabulary, where a single word can sometimes convey an entire concept (Shayer & Adey, 1993). With WBL evolving in diverse places at similar times, there was not an initial standardisation of vocabulary. Consequently, what one group has meant by a term has not necessarily been exactly the same as another has meant. Even when definitions are similar, there are disagreements on the writing of the term. Work Based Learning sometimes appears with a hyphen (work-based learning) and sometimes with the two words joined (workbased learning). Sometimes it appears with capital letters at the start of each word; sometimes in lower case.

Terms such as work-based learning, workforce development, employer-led learning, career development and skills development are often used

interchangeably (even in Government documents). In addition, there are other concepts currently in use such as lifelong learning, flexible learning, work-related learning and vocational education which are linked to but not the same as work-based learning. (Banim, 2009:4)

#### **2.4.2 Banim's Rough Guide**

Banim's *Rough Guide* was produced as an overview and guide to resources for strengthening links between HE and the workplace. The key aims included exploring the parameters of WBL, outlining the academic contexts within which it could occur, identifying the range of practice within her University, identifying starting points for staff engagement in WBL, and pointing to additional resources. Learning, teaching and assessment strategies in use for WBL at the time it was produced were included, but agreeing definitions was acknowledged as one of the biggest difficulties concerning WBL. This short guide provided a useful starting point and stimulus for defining WBL and its terminology at that moment in time. In addition to recognising the opportunities for learner-driven programmes, the guide raised issues about WBL and provided information sources to enable readers to explore them further.

#### **2.4.3 Standardising terminology**

Later that year *Getting Started with University level Work Based Learning* (Durrant, Rhodes and Young, 2009) was distributed widely throughout the UK WBL community of practice, and the work, including its glossary has made a considerable contribution to standardising terminology. Since then, there have been three other significant works for those involved in WBL.

#### **2.4.4 Experiences of WBL practitioners**

Garnett, Costley and Workman (2009) edited *Work Based Learning – Journeys to the Core of Higher Education* based on many experiences of WBL practitioners at Middlesex University. Written by WBL practitioners with 'how to' knowledge, for future WBL practitioners, the book traces the development and implementation of WBL at the University. The book generously shares the difficulties, the implemented solutions, and celebrates the successes with case studies illustrating various perspectives of this development. The final section considers themes related to WBL, including chapters on 'Partnerships in Higher Education' (Rounce, 2009), 'The Core Components: Teaching, Learning and Assessing' (Workman, 2009) and 'Contributing the Intellectual Capital of Organisations' (Garnett, 2009b) that are especially relevant to this research.

#### **2.4.5 A WBL Student Handbook**

*The Work-Based Learning Student Handbook* (edited by Helyer, 2010), a Palgrave Study Skills book written specifically for candidates who are new to WBL has a comprehensive collection of chapters, written by highly-respected experts. The candidate is guided through various processes involved in studying WBL at university with detailed

descriptions of various components of WBL courses and sound advice on how to approach tasks to gain maximum benefit from them. Chapter 3: 'Learning to Learn' (Hooker, 2010:63) outlines learning styles and the associated theory to maximise the reader's learning opportunities. In Chapter 6: 'Support for WBL Students: From University, Employer and Self' (Naish, 2010:155) strategies for effective support includes an outline of Transactional Analysis Theory (Berne, 1964) where operating in adult mode gives the most effective transactions for WBL (and self-directed learning). Chapter 7: "The Technology Revolution" (McClenaghan & Young, 2010:180) provides information about using various types of technology, not just the university's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), with a clear outline of the purpose, benefits, and initial access for each. The book presents an up-to-date view of following a WBL programme as a learning experience and is underpinned by many academic references with suggested further readings that also make it essential reading for new WBL lecturers.

#### **2.4.6 WBL insider-research**

*Doing Work Based Research: Approaches to Enquiry by Insider-researchers* (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010) is an excellent handbook for anyone engaged in insider-research. The reader is taken through essential considerations of researching in a familiar context, with advantages and potential pitfalls relevant to WBL courses indicated. The emphasis on the importance of insider-research for long-term success of companies is particularly relevant to this research. Under the heading 'Making an impact from the inside', (p.5) the authors say:

Raelin (2008) recognises the growing body of evidence suggesting that work based projects may prove immensely beneficial to the long-term success of companies. Nixon & KSA (2008) demonstrate that engaging reflection at work and undertaking insider-led research can make significant contributions to work practices.

#### **2.4.7 WBL theory**

Boud is generally acknowledged by WBL practitioners as one of the core contributors to WBL theory. Referring to WBL degrees, Boud and Symes (2000: 21) state: "...work is quite literally the foundation of the curriculum ... the activity from which learning arises and by which learning is defined'

#### **2.4.8 WBL's historical development**

*A Guide to Work Based Learning Terms*" (Levy *et al*, 1989)) mentioned in Phase One above (2.2.2) foreshadows the core components of current WBL practiced in UK universities, in using the workplace as a resource for learning. Projects and independent development plans that encourage reflection maintain business as usual, while marking the shift to include adult education in vocational education (p59):

Work Based Learning uses the work place as a learning resource.... A principle of work based learning is therefore the enhancement of learning opportunities at the

workplace. This requires strategies for structuring learning in the workplace which do not interfere with workplace production or turn the workplace into a classroom in the traditional sense. Included in such strategies are work based projects and the construction and use of individual development plans (IDPs) which encourage opportunities for reflection on workplace performance.

Page 63 presages employer engagement with an emphasis on the economic need to re-skill employees while linking the educational process with business plans:

Work based learning methods and approaches can contribute to the aims expressed in the White Paper Employment for the 1990s: ‘... we need to recognise the commercial necessity of re-skilling people, and the central importance of linking training plans with business plans ...’ (Department of Employment, 1988).

The guide defines accreditation as “the process of formal and public recognition of an individual’s skills, knowledge, experience or competence”. Assessment of prior (or experiential) learning / accreditation of prior achievement is based on work including NCVQ, and covers Assessment of Prior Learning, as the basis of current practice for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL).

#### **2.4.9 WBL and social justice opportunities for HE**

WBL as professional development for adults in work developed from VET origins into university provision in the early 1990s, but other drivers may have included social justice opportunities concerning access to higher education, paralleling the ideology of the Workers Education Association, a provider of educational opportunities for workers, at a time when active trade union membership had been severely eroded.

From 1992 polytechnics became new universities. Although awards had had rigorous Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) assessment procedures in place from 1965, these ‘post 1992’ universities were initially associated with vocational education, considered by some as *infra dig*. However, the expertise from polytechnics became available to universities, and it was in these post-1992 universities that HE WBL initiatives were first developed.

WBL can offer social justice opportunities of access to Higher Education by those who may otherwise be excluded. Policy debates emphasised the culture of lifelong learning so that employees could be sufficiently adaptable to remain employable throughout their working life, and the individual was expected to take responsibility for his or her own learning. However, as Rainbird (2000:183) indicates, this did not address patterns of inequalities in access to WBL:

Unskilled workers are least likely to receive formal training in the workplace and they are often those whose experience of formal schooling has been poor and are unlikely to access learning outside the workplace on their own initiative.

A London survey (National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education, 1990:1) indicated that “Adult learning opportunities are available and taken up by those who enjoy an extended initial education, and by those who come from professional and managerial backgrounds”.

Rainbird (2000:185) notes that the issue is complicated by qualifications being used as a filter for selecting employees:

Although there may be a correspondence between the output of the education system and employers' requirements for different types of labour, qualifications may serve as a sorting mechanism in recruitment rather than an indicator of productive potential (p.185).

There may be a mismatch between an employee's 'accumulated experience' (Cockburn, 1983:113) such as educational experience and job-related learning, and the skill levels required for a specific job. This, together with the role assignment of the job may influence the employee's motivation and uptake of further learning. Diminished personal aspirations and lack of expectations from management may result in loss of confidence and reinforcement of inequalities. In mid 2010, the number of working-age adults in the UK who were either unemployed or underemployed was 5.9 million (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010) <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-social-exclusion-2010-summary.pdf> [accessed 10th December, 2011]. The need for growing the economy to create new jobs is vital. WBL will not be accessible for everyone, but in some situations, for those with personal ambition, and funding, WBL presents a social justice opportunity for accessing HE that may make a difference to the organisations, with further possible positive impact on the communities beyond.

#### **2.4.10 WBL and social models of learning**

During the last decade of the twentieth century there was a new 'techno-economic paradigm' (Stern & Sommerlad, 1999:xi;1) with workplace learning becoming fashionable, mainly due to globalisation and new information technologies, which also fuelled renewed interest in lifelong learning and the 'learning organisation'. There was also a shift to new social models of learning that stressed the collective, rather than the individual perspective, and reflected new modes of work organisation including teamwork and group work.

Jarvis, Holford & Griffin (2003:1-2) tabled changes in learning.

The changes are from:

- childhood to adult to lifelong;
- the few to the many;
- education and training to learning;
- learning as a process to learning as an institutional phenomenon;
- teacher-centred to student-centred;
- liberal to vocational and human resource development;
- theoretical to practical;
- single discipline knowledge to multidisciplinary knowledge to integrated knowledge;
- knowledge as truth to knowledge as relative / information / narrative / discourse;
- rote learning to reflective learning;
- welfare provision (needs) to market demands (wants);
- classical curriculum to romantic curriculum to programme;
- face-to-face to distance to e-learning.

## 2.5 WBL learning partnerships

### 2.5.1 A changing HE perspective

UK government policy changes in funding arrangements for HEI/employer engagement during the twenty-first century has gradually determined an increase in skill levels. HEIs have changed to new participative, negotiated roles within a learning partnership: the workplace is increasingly acknowledged as providing a meaningful context of learning of relevance to HE although challenging the established culture of the university. Harvey (2007:29) states:

The current UK political and economic agendas are changing the way that higher education relates to individual learners and employers in that the work context is being seen as an important place where learning happens. Workers and employers are therefore being recognised as relevant partners in learning programmes rather than just receivers of university designed courses and programmes.

### 2.5.2 Benefits for each partner

This move to learning partnerships benefits each partner. The HEIs become challenged in terms of their willingness to take risks of a more commercial nature to respond to the needs of their partners, while providing advantages of multi-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary learning that stretch the capacities and capabilities of their partners with new knowledge and critical thinking techniques. Partnerships can innovate through new, flexible approaches with partners potentially learning from each other. Addressing a new/potential WBL student/delegate/candidate, Helyer (2010:18) says:

Building relationships with different kinds of students, like you, and increasingly also with your employer, means that HEIs are behaving more commercially and taking more risks. This is bound to challenge a culture more accustomed to behaving in established, and somewhat risk-averse, ways, but it assists with the continuous development of HE as a stretching environment. Working with you and your employer makes HE more responsive and more likely to develop and deliver learning opportunities which are relevant in the twenty-first century; programmes of a bespoke, negotiated, adaptable and often multi-disciplinary nature.

Although partnerships may initially appear to focus on commercial viability and improved skills, there is much more at stake. WBL reaches into the social and intellectual aspects of life by exploring culture, values and abilities. WBL improves skills, extends capabilities and capacities to live life to the full, and transforms lives. Taking an all-embracing view of learning will ensure that vital attributes are developed, while the advantages of Higher Education with the ability to critique take thinking to a higher plane. Helyer and Hooker (2007:70) put skills and knowledge within the broader and higher context of the full potential of learning:

To view skills and knowledge as only about the workplace, and most importantly the profit margins of the workplace, discounts what learning can also do to improve the rest of life. More rounded and capable individuals, who possess the expertise required to actually undertake 'learning', are much more likely to be socially complete (Burgoyne *et al* 2004). By honing generic skills and behaviours such as dedication, discipline, enquiry, analysis, critical debate, creativity, autonomy,



making connections and reading widely humans are better equipped to respond positively to change, a necessity in our rapidly evolving world.

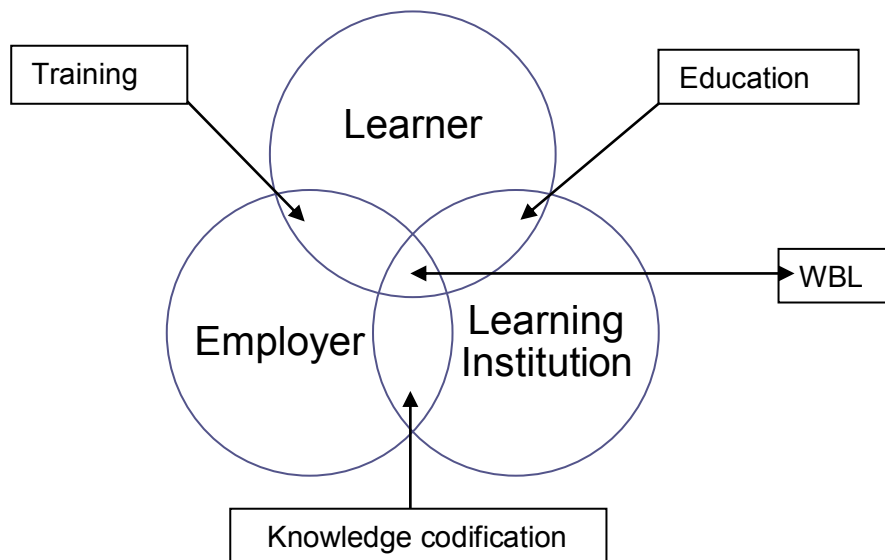
### 2.5.3 A three-way relationship

WBL is generally considered to be a three-way relationship between the student, his or her employer, and the university. Edmunds (2007:125) presented a model linking learner, employer and learning institution, which interlinks training (learner and employer), education (learner and learning institution) and knowledge codification (employer and learning institution) to WBL.

Edmunds argues:

In this model I attempt to define work-based learning as a situation in which the learning experience is inclusive of the learner, employer and the Learning Institution. In other words there is the active participation to at least some extent by each of those parties. I argue that situations where only two of those groups are participating as something else – I suggest education or training (p.125).

**Figure 2.1: A representation of Edmunds' model**



Edmunds also suggests that:

- the employer / learning institution relationship generates knowledge to codify against the relevant academic requirements of the learning institution;
- WBL is not narrowly academic;
- accreditation distinguishes it from training;
- WBL is directly relevant to the individual's work, in a work-specific context, distinguishing it from general education; and
- the three elements would need to be "somehow, in balance".

From this Edmunds proposed a definition:

Work based learning: the acquisition of accredited knowledge and skill in the context of purposeful activity involving the active participation of an individual learner, their employing organisation and an education or training institution working to an agreed curriculum to the mutual benefit of each (p.125).

This definition is incomplete because it does not cover people who may be working without an employer (Lyon, 2007:105) or community of practice (Costley, 2000:27-29). However, it has merit as an initial working definition within the context of HE/employer engagement and this research, particularly as it redresses the implied issues of ownership of a prescribed curriculum noted by Apple (2001:11):

The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge.

Accredited knowledge positively implies credibility of standards, but a focus on the acquisition of a 'qualification' rather than on the learning would miss the essence of any educational experience. A qualification validates a learning experience that includes opportunities for developing and acknowledging many aspects of skills and knowledge, including those that arise from experience and practice, as well as the more conventional 'knowing that' propositional knowledge. To return to Helyer and Hooker (2007:71):

... placing all the emphasis on the qualification and none on learning *via* experience seems short sighted. A qualification does not automatically bestow capability, awarding a certificate does not bring vital experience. .... If HEIs are to be led by Leitch's focus on new study, then ultimately qualifications have to be better; more holistic with a remit to improve the many facets of the student; it is also vital to improve and include how we acknowledge, develop and validate existing skills, knowledge, experience and work-practice.

Learning from the programme takes place, initially, at an individual level.

#### **2.5.4 WBL's higher profile**

HE/Employer engagement has gained a high profile in recent years with a dedicated section within the Higher Education Academy

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/engagement> [accessed 03/10/09].

Main reasons for this high profile include:

- developments in technology increasing information accessibility, with consequent changes in academia and world economies;
- employer recognition of highly competitive demands within a global economy;
- government demands for a highly trained workforce (Leitch, 2006); and
- universities needing new markets to compensate for changing demographics reducing traditional student demand.

Tallantyre (2008a:5) points out the trend for universities to move into provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD):

Many universities have already acknowledged the huge size of the CPD market compared to the undergraduate market ... the demographic downturn makes it imperative for many that they urgently seek to re-engineer their processes to accommodate CPD provision.

Experienced professionals use work as the main focus of their WBL study. They consider what they do and how they work as professionals. They make the implicit parts of their work explicit, so that they can share what they do with others, and can relate this to theory. This requires a commonality of language and understanding that is developed within a work place or a community of practice. By reflecting upon practice experienced professionals can decide how best to refine a process, or how best to put things (or information) together in a new way. This could be considered as innovation. As leading experts in their fields, experienced professionals may be able to develop new theory that could in turn lead to other new developments or innovations.

WBL is about extending the capacities of the individual so that their skills / talents are used in the best way possible. “At the heart of the distinctive nature of a university WBL programme is the interaction between the needs of a specific learner, their work, and the university” (Garnett, 2009b:227). A lecturer, usually from a university, will, in the academic tradition of *dominie* (to lead), challenge the thinking of the WBL candidate to use skills in a more ‘rationalised’ way, combining thought and action to meet the specific needs of the learner in the best way, but additional benefit can be gained for the organisation if a strategic need has been identified by the candidate’s line-manager or employer. The three individuals work at the micro-level with their own specific roles guiding their actions, while each is also a representative of an organisation (the meso-level) with insights into workings of their own organisation. At the micro-level, both individual and professional motivations are contextualised within a particular, unique culture. At the meso-level, motivations, organisational policies and procedures are in place, and conform to the organisation’s culture within a wider, regional context. At the macro-level, HEIs and Employers work according to local and national government policies and funding within a wider national or even global context. This indicates the interrelationship between the different layers of stakeholders and their cultures; contextualises the motivation of candidates, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3; and signals the relevance of the regional context.

### **2.5.5 WBL and the knowledge economy**

During the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with increasing use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), there was a growing awareness of the change to a knowledge-based economy. Banim (2009; 6) posits:

...with the emergence of the concept of the ‘knowledge economy’, there is a recognition that the workplace generates knowledge and that therefore a ‘graduate’ education is not complete without allowing students the opportunities to learn from work.

This acknowledgement of the workplace generating knowledge, confirmed the importance of the link between HE and the workplace, and establishes the basis of partnerships to generate WBL courses, as investigated in this research.

Brennan (2005:5), under the heading 'Higher education and economic competitiveness' explains:

Three areas of economic analysis which link higher education to economic success are particularly relevant here: changing employment patterns and changes in the organisation of work, changing skills requirements, particularly in relation to higher level skills, and the rise of the so-called 'knowledge economy'...

Brennan *et al* (2006:11) reinforce the importance of workplace learning to HE's future role within the knowledge society, but acknowledge that it includes personal development for the learner.

Issues of workplace learning are central to the future role of higher education in the knowledge society. For the learner, the workplace is a prime source of new learning as well as a site for the application of existing knowledge. But workplace learning is not just about learning to do a job: it is about personal development and the acquisition of knowledge and skills that transcend particular settings or roles.

With traditional career patterns breaking down, government policies have emphasised the importance of lifelong learning to replace the notion of 'a job for life' because work organisation are required to be "more agile, to be able to respond quickly to changing market conditions and to develop new collaborative abilities both within and between organisations" (ANTA, 2003:3). This means that workers need a wider range of skills: technical, cognitive, and generic or transferable skills to be employable within the 'knowledge economy' or learning society, where although the new knowledge has a high use-value, it may only have a short life. Brennan (2005:7) explains more about the knowledge economy:

In the contemporary economic environment, learning is seen as an integral and ongoing feature of working... In this version of human capital theory, intellectual capital has become critical to economic success. This approach focuses on the importance of knowledge creation and the application and manipulation of 'new' knowledge in the workplace.

This 'new' knowledge, according to Chappell *et al* (2003:vi):

... is often context specific, ... is rarely the product of individuals but arises through collaborations and networks that exist within specific sites and particular contexts... is also rarely codified in text books, formal training programs, competency standards, or procedural manuals and text books. Instead, it is developed within the context and environment of the immediate workplace from the base of relevant skills and knowledge, including technical knowledge, held by workers.

This new knowledge can be thought of as Mode 2 knowledge, the type of knowledge that candidates have experienced within the workplace. If candidates' skills can be honed as Brennan recommends, then candidates may have much to contribute to the knowledge economy.

## 2.6 Epistemology, knowledge and ways of knowing

According to Scheffler (1999:1-2):

The development and transmission of knowledge are fundamental tasks of education, while analysis of its nature and warrant falls to that branch of philosophy known as epistemology, or theory of knowledge. ..

It is hardly surprising then, that the concept of knowledge should have given rise to a variety of traditions of full-blown philosophical interpretation. For not only does the mere breadth of the concept lend itself to alternative emphases, but its ultimate association with variable ideals of civilisation and with changing technologies and scientific models invites correspondingly varying evaluations.

### 2.6.1 Epistemology for this research

The epistemological approach taken for this research is that of a social constructivist, which is discussed within the following chapter on research methods. However, it is important to be aware of different philosophical views when looking at the concept of knowledge within education.

Scheffler (1999:1) states:

...attributions of knowledge are not, in typical cases simply descriptive of bodies of lore or types of experience: they express our standards, ideals, and tastes as to the scope and proper conduct of the cognitive arts. They reflect, for example, our conceptions of truth and evidence, our estimates of the possibilities of secure belief, our preferences among alternative strategies of investigation. To describe someone as knowing is as much to appraise and approve as it is to report. Correspondingly, education is concerned to transmit not only what we know, but our manner of knowing, that is, our approved standards of competence in performance, in inquiry, and in intellectual criticism.

### 2.6.2 Positivism and alternative view of knowing

Positivism, "an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond" (Bryman, 2008:697) within universities has dictated that theory, using Mode 1 knowledge concerned with 'knowing that' generated within a disciplinary, mainly cognitive context (Gibbons *et al*, 1994:1), is more important than practice, using Mode 2 knowledge concerned with 'knowing how' generated within broader, transdisciplinary social and economic contexts (Gibbons *et al*, 1994:1).

The academic concept of knowledge has generally followed the conventions of the Positivist scientific approach which were then reinforced by the psychology of learning that also followed this scientific approach. It is possible that there are many different forms of knowledge and ways of knowing that still need to be investigated from alternative perspectives.

Theory without practice would in most cases not produce results, therefore, it could be argued that new theory could be developed through an analysis of practice. Theory and

practice may, or may not, be characteristics possessed by the same individual. Equally, one person may or may not practice a number of skills well. To take this a step further, one person does not necessarily have all the skills required to complete a task, so there is a further type of knowledge where someone can identify the source of the required skill: 'knowing who' and also the rationale for doing something: 'knowing why'.

### **2.6.3 Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge**

Gibbons et al (1994) posit a contested alternative view to the Positivist, scientific approach to knowledge dominated much of academic thinking throughout the twentieth century. Although not universally accepted, Mode 2 knowledge has academic credibility in that it is supported by the writing of Ryle (1949) (discussed in 2.6.10 below). It also uses 'Communities of Practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) as a socially accountable 'peer review' that gives validity to Mode 2 knowledge in a similar way to the peer review process required for validating scientific knowledge.

### **2.6.4 Mode 1 Knowledge**

This can be considered as knowledge produced and owned by academics within traditional subject disciplines (Gibbons *et al*, 1994) It is theoretical and could be simply stated as 'to know that'. However, it is also part of the power structure related to the Positivist tradition, where peer review, by selected peers, maintains the *status quo*.

### **2.6.5 Mode 2 Knowledge**

Mode 2 knowledge is that which is acquired, produced and developed within the context within which it will be used, practiced and implemented (Gibbons *et al*, 1994) and as it may add to the intellectual capital of the organisation in which it is situated, is related to WBL (Walsh, 2008). It is practical, usually socially situated, and is concerned with 'to know how'. However, it is not part of the traditional power structure of the academy, although it may have to be socially accountable to many more people for it to be given approval, as explained by Gibbons *et al* (1994) below.

In the Preface to their book, in which they aim to explore major changes in the way knowledge is being produced, Gibbons *et al*, describe Mode 2 as working in a transient, transdisciplinary context of application that involves many actors so becomes more socially accountable, and uses a wider range of criteria to judge and control quality with the process of knowledge production becoming more reflexive than Mode 1 knowledge which is different.

They state:

Our view is that while Mode 2 may not be replacing Mode 1, Mode 2 is different from Mode 1 – in nearly every respect. The new Mode operates within a context of application in that problems are not set within a disciplinary framework, It is transdisciplinary rather than mono- or multi-disciplinary. It is carried out in non-hierarchical, heterogeneously organised forms which are essentially transient. It is

not being institutionalised primarily within university structures. Mode 2 involves the close interaction of many actors through the process of knowledge production, and this means that knowledge production is becoming more socially accountable. One consequence of these changes is that Mode 2 makes use of a wider range of criteria in judging quality control. Overall, the process of knowledge production is becoming more reflexive and affects at the deepest level what shall count as 'good science'.

#### **2.6.6 An alternative to the Positivist paradigm**

Gibbons *et al*, explain:

For many, Mode 1 is identical with what is meant by science. Its cognitive and social norms determine what shall count as significant problems, who shall be allowed to practise science, and what constitutes good science. Forms of practice which adhere to these rules are by definition scientific, while those that violate them are not (p.2-3).

Because the use of 'science' and 'scientists' is traditionally associated with Mode 1, the more general terms 'knowledge' and 'practitioners' are used when describing Mode 2, to highlight the differences. Social norms, although different, still validate Mode 2 at least as strongly as 'good science' would be validated.

#### **2.6.7 Mode 2 knowledge and the knowledge economy**

Mode 2 knowledge is important to this research concerning organisations (or firms) because they collaborate with a university in order to gain a comparative advantage, through specialist knowledge, within the knowledge economy.

Gibbons *et al* (1994:12-13) explain:

Specialist knowledge is often a key factor in determining a firm's comparative advantage ... Specialist knowledge is used partly because it proves a constantly replenishable source of created comparative advantage, and partly because it can be difficult to imitate ... specialised knowledge is at a premium but its acquisition is difficult and often too expensive for individual firms to replicate entirely in-house. To meet this exigency firms have become involved in a complex array of collaborative arrangements involving universities, governments and other firms, sometimes from within the same sector. In each case supply and demand are mediated by a market mechanism, but, again, it is not, or need not be, a narrowly commercial one .

Organisations collaborating with universities can gain comparative advantage through specialist knowledge that can be difficult to imitate, particularly within a different culture.

Specialist (Mode 2) knowledge is not easily bought or sold like other commodities.

It is increasingly generated in the market nexus itself. In producing specialised knowledge markets operate to configure human and physical resources in a particular context of applications. ... Markets are dynamic. They set new problems more or less continuously and the sites move on. Knowledge is produced by configuring human capital. However, unlike physical capital, human capital is potentially more malleable. Human resources can be configured again and again to generate new forms of specialised knowledge. The ability to do this lies at the heart of many economies of scope which are currently regarded as crucial to survival in the market place (Gibbons *et al*, 1994:13).

### 2.6.8 Solving a practical problem / creating specialist knowledge

Someone who understands a particular form of specialised knowledge can work with others to solve a problem. In doing so, new knowledge is formed, which may be transient in nature, but can be recalled and reused for solving a subsequent problem. If organisations collaborate with universities they can together build the conditions for a unique culture and human capital with specialist knowledge that give advantage through being difficult to imitate, and malleable enough to enable survival in a highly competitive market. WBL courses that are designed in partnerships can produce such bespoke specialist knowledge.

Gibbons *et al* (1994:17) consider that as well as being transdisciplinary in nature, with specialists from diverse backgrounds working together to form new knowledge, Mode 2 is by nature socially distributed. Mode 2 knowledge production is embodied in people and their interactions in socially organised forms. The emphasis is on the tacit aspects of knowledge, but the quality control procedures include context- and use-dependent criteria, so that as well as meeting the usual expectations of scientific excellence, Mode 2 knowledge also has to demonstrate efficiency or usefulness as part of its solution to a transdisciplinary problem. The generated knowledge becomes an ordered structure that feeds back into the knowledge system and is available for solving the next problem. The entire system develops through the design process, where an ever-increasing body of knowledge can be accessed in order to find new solutions.

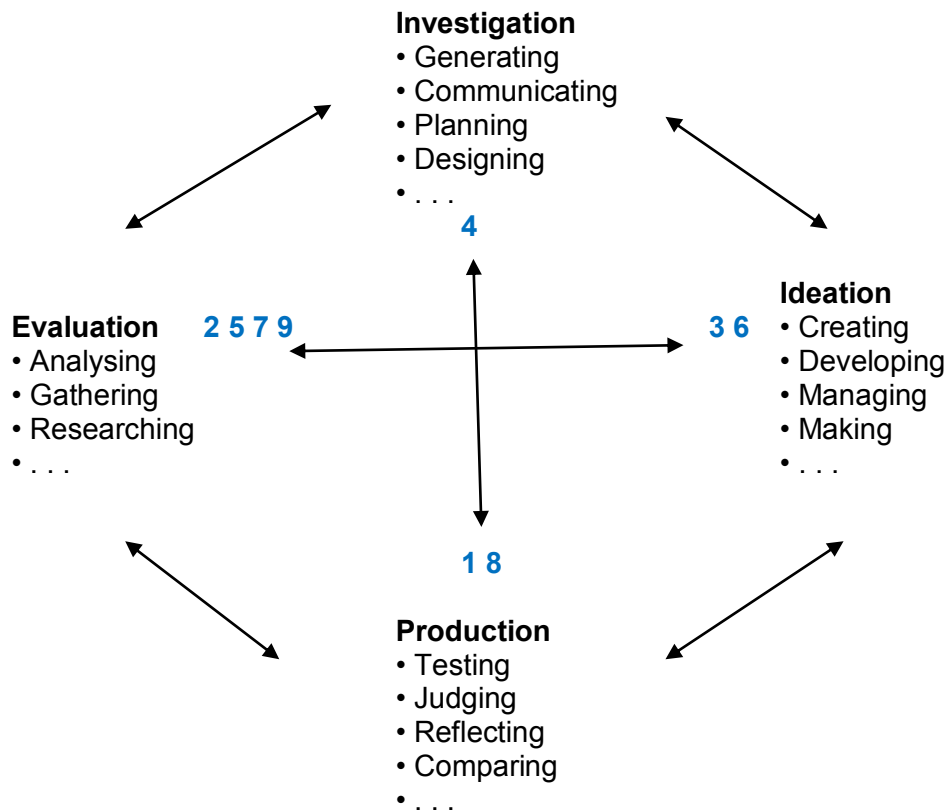
Socially distributed knowledge production is dependent upon good communications, and makes full use of computerised systems and electronic communications. Mode 1 knowledge is discipline-based and makes a distinction between fundamental theoretical knowledge and other areas of knowledge where theory is translated into practice. Mode 2 knowledge production is different in that it is transdisciplinary, and the constant flow cycling between the theoretical and the applied is ever-changing, because knowledge that is put to use produces results that fuel further advances.

This can be illustrated by a Technology Practice cycle (QSA, 2003:19) shown in Figure 2.2 that has similarities to Kolb's learning cycle (see 2.7.4 below) but illustrates use of Mode 2 rather than Mode 1 knowledge.

It is possible to start at any point, but, if something has been produced as a solution to a problem, it may be at the production stage (1). The 'product' may be evaluated (2) and may suggest some new application through ideation (3), but the solution may need investigation (4) and may produce new ideas to be evaluated (5) before further ideation (6) creates an evaluated (7) solution to be produced (8) and then evaluated (9). The design is constantly evolving as it moves through the process, in whatever order is determined by the problem, and new knowledge is constantly developed.



**Figure 2.2 Technology Practice**



Teams, or communities of practice, that develop new knowledge may change rapidly, but each member will carry part of that new knowledge. If communication systems are used well, then some of the new knowledge may be stored or embedded for future use by others who know how and where to look for it.

#### **2.6.9 WBL as a bridge between M1 and M2 knowledge**

The concepts of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge, simplified to 'to know that' or 'to know how' can portray the differences between the world of the university and the world of work, with WBL as a means of bridging these two separate worlds.

A poster (Fisher, 2009) (Appendix 7) represents traditional academic, Mode 1 knowledge on the left; with the 'world of work' (Mode 2, 'how to' knowledge) on the right. WBL positioned centrally bridges the gap between the two types of knowledge and their different worlds. The poster illustrates that WBL provides the common ground of praxis between the two different worlds and maps the differences between:

- Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge,
- knowledge perspectives of the academic and employment worlds: understanding the other perspective may help to bridge communication gaps;
- traditional degrees e.g. Bachelor of Education (the student stepping from the academe into work to gain practical experience) and WBL qualifications (the

candidate's head moves into the academic world to gain theory to underpin extensive practical application.

Practical and theoretical knowledge are both important: WBL starts with the practical and moves to an understanding of the theoretical; the theorist needs to understand the practical applications of theory. A philosophical stance rather than a functional approach may be taken to the theoretical considerations underpinning WBL.

#### **2.6.10 Ryle's 'knowing how and knowing that'**

'Knowing How and Knowing That' is the title of the second chapter of the book *The Concept of Mind* (Ryle, 1949). Ryle, influenced by Wittgenstein's insights into language, attacks the ideas of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers such as Descartes, who considered nature as a complex machine, and human nature as a smaller machine, with human qualities attributed to a 'ghost' within the machine. Western philosophy, based on a body-mind dualism with an independent mind inhabiting and governing the body, led to mental vocabulary to describe and explain human behaviour. Ryle considers this as redundant literalism from the era before biological sciences became established, and that the mind-body language's function is to describe characteristics from the evidence of behaviour. Ryle (1949:58-9) contends that the workings of the mind are not separate from the actions of the body; they are one and the same, and that mental vocabulary is a different way of describing action.

Overt intelligent performances are not clues to the workings of minds; they are those workings. ....

Learning how or improving in ability is not like learning that or acquiring information. Truths can be imparted, procedures can only be inculcated, and while inculcation is a gradual process, imparting is relatively sudden. It makes sense to ask at what moment someone became apprised of a truth, but not to ask at what moment some acquired a skill. 'Part trained' is a significant phrase, 'part-informed' is not. Training is the art of setting tasks which the pupils have not yet accomplished but are not any longer quite incapable of accomplishing.

#### **2.6.11 Tacit knowledge and Polanyi**

Polanyi (1958) maintains that *all* knowledge (including so-called objective facts of science) involves a personal and subjective component – tacit knowledge, but, for this knowledge to be realised and shared it has to be made explicit. The word 'tacit' comes from the Latin 'taceo': 'I am silent'.

According to Gibbons *et al* (1994; 24-5) some tacit knowledge may conveniently be regarded as residing in the heads of those working on a particular transformation process, or to be embodied in a particular organisational context. The distinction between codified and tacit knowledge can be complemented by a parallel distinction between migratory and embedded knowledge. Since the majority of technical knowledge is tacit and embedded it is not generally available. It tends to move between and with individuals as they move

from problem to problem and from one organisational context to another. Tacit knowledge is learned on the job through training and experience.

#### **2.6.12 Schön and the epistemology of practice**

Schön (1983:21) discusses the incomplete model of Technical Rationality, based on the Positivist view of Science, and recognises its limited use in practice. He looks instead for “an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict”. Schön acknowledges that in actions of everyday life:

our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is *in* our action. Similarly, the workaday life of the professional depends on tacit knowing-in-action....They turn thought back on action and on the knowing which is implicit in action (p. 49).

Schön quotes Ryle before saying: “Over the years, several writers on the epistemology of practice have been struck by the fact that skilful action often reveals a ‘knowing more than we can say’.” Schön also discusses knowing in design, and notes Vickers’ (1965) extension of this into a ‘sense of form which cannot be fully articulated’.

#### **2.6.13 Learning using intuition, skills, reflection, creative imagination and metaphor**

This intuitive understanding of form and of skilful action improves through practice, as it feeds back into itself, as a form of learning. However, through reflection, and intentionally trying to express this tacit understanding, the implicit can be made more explicit so that it can be shared with others. The act of sharing and making explicit opens new possibilities through creative imagination, use of metaphor and re-contextualising the knowledge that adds to potential repertoire of the originator of the tacit understanding, so that by endeavouring to teach, the teacher also learns. This is important for WBL, and for those who learn by doing, as well as for those who teach.

#### **2.6.14 Nonaka and Takeuchi’s SECI model of learning or knowledge creation**

This links into Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) SECI model of learning or knowledge creation. This has four phases of socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation, represented by four quadrants, with knowledge creation spiralling outwards as the tacit knowledge is observed through socialisation, made more explicit through externalisation, discussed and combined to form new knowledge, which is then internalised, and becomes part of tacit knowledge.

#### **2.6.15 A changing perspective of knowledge**

Gibbons *et al* (1994:81) having put forward two modes of knowledge explain that knowledge can no longer be considered as previously, and that is a mixture of theory and practice with blurred boundaries between the intellectual world and its environment.

Knowledge can no longer be regarded as discrete and coherent, its production defined by clear rules and governed by settled routines. Instead it has become a

mixture of theory and practice, abstraction and aggregation, ideas and data. The boundaries between the intellectual world and its environment have become blurred.

The citations above, from a number of seminal works, indicate the importance of tacit knowledge which, as an important component of work is an essential part of WBL.

## 2.7 Individual Learning, Organisational Learning and Pedagogy

The connection between the learning of individual candidates and the notion of organisational learning is pertinent to any potential impact of WBL on the organisation, however, the focus of this research is on WBL; it is not focusing on Organisational Learning (OL) which is a discipline within its own right. The research aims to see if the impact of WBL on the individual moves beyond a personal impact, into the individual's work, and whether its influence may spread further. However, it is apposite to look, briefly, at the incredibly complex, and contested arena of OL. According to Maier, Prange and von Rosenstiel (2001:15) there are two views of organisational learning in management literature. The first uses organisational learning as an analogy of individual learning, and takes the process of individual learning as a way of understanding the concept and processes of organisational learning. In the second view individual learning is a basis for organisational learning (e.g. Argyris and Schön, 1978; Hedberg, 1981; March and Olsen 1975). According to this view, increases in organisational knowledge – an indicator of organisational learning – are based on the growth by knowledge acquisition of the individuals in an organisation. Close examination of the learning processes studied in psychology can enrich both views.

### 2.7.1 Psychological Perspectives of Organisational Learning

Maier, Prange and von Rosenstiel (2001:15) state that individual learning may be considered from a behaviourist viewpoint where species adapt to their environment in order to survive. They consider the two possibilities: firstly evolution, where useful features (capabilities or skills) are passed down from generation to generation enabling each generation to survive; secondly, adaptation, where the organism learns and then adopts new behaviour to optimise its survival. They state:

Adaptation through learning is inherently risky because the individual does not know for certain how to react to the environment during the learning process and therefore might be killed before acquiring the necessary skills for survival.

They question why this precarious strategy is taken when all skills and capabilities could be inherited, but reason that “evolutionary adaptation is not flexible enough to permit adequate response to a constantly changing environment. Human beings are no exception.” They acknowledge that there are different psychological approaches (such as behaviourism and cognitivism) to learning, but settle on Anderson's definition (1995:4) where learning in general is defined as “a process by which relatively permanent changes

occur in behavioural potential as a result of experience". They consider that the results of learning should be observable, but that does not have to be enacted:

The term 'behavioural potential' in the definition of learning encompasses two aspects. First the results of the learning process should be observable in the individual's behaviour. Second, the term 'potential' calls attention to the fact that not every learning process inevitably culminates in overt behaviour.

They note that a process takes more time to learn than a single event, and illustrate that not all learning is good with an example that someone would need to 'unlearn' how to type with two fingers in order to learn to type efficiently with ten.

This last example negates much of what they have said. Learning how to type with ten fingers (or more precisely eight fingers and two thumbs) is a different skill from typing with two fingers. Knowledge of the keyboard layout learned from the two finger technique, is still used, but 'muscle memory' is also developed. An example of muscle memory can be demonstrated by asking people to write down numbers that they usually key in on a key pad. Many people cannot write the numbers without physically 'keying in' their response first, although some may need to say it aloud. If someone who has typed with two fingers is unable to use all ten fingers, perhaps due to an injury, they are likely to be able to recall their previous skill. Once a skill has been learned, it has been learned. It may not be used as effectively if it is not practised, but it is unlikely to be forgotten altogether, therefore it cannot be said to have been 'unlearned'. A different skill may replace it as the automatic response to a stimulus, but the original skill remains dormant, ready for recall if required.

A second point of disagreement with the behaviourist definition is that "the results of the learning should be observable in the individual's behaviour". Learning about the form and structure of music may add to its appreciation by the listener. Although experienced, and learned, the actual learning cannot produce 'observable behaviour' that is meaningful. Similarly, the explanation of nuances of meaning, rhyme and metre in poetry is learning that can add considerably to the experience of the learner, and this may be applied to other unfamiliar poems, but it is not actually observable. It may be argued that this implicit knowledge could be made explicit in order to be shared with others, but that would be an 'interpretation' of the learning, rather than a direct observation. Positivist insistence upon directly measurable evidence is sometimes taken to extremes that make nonsense of things that are not easily measured. Furthermore, the behaviourist definition does not explain creativity, where things may be put together so that the final product is greater than the sum of the individual contributions.

The behaviourist viewpoint is too simplistic: it reduces everything to a primitive level where a certain stimulus produces a certain (automatic) response so is based on classical conditioning. Alternatively, Thorndike's (1935) successive pairing of behaviour and a consequence can reduce or increase the frequency of that behaviour. This instrumental

conditioning was restated by Skinner (1948:168) where trial and error learning followed by a positive reinforcement of a particular response ensured that the response became automatic. If a response becomes automatic then it becomes a means of control. Another behaviourist approach is that of social learning, where again the desired learning is reinforced through rewards, but the learning is based on observation of a model who is rewarded (Bandura, 1969, 1977). An automatic response potentially undermines the entire notion of education, where the ability is developed to check that the most appropriate response is being made in the context of available information at that moment in time. If there is to be a choice of responses, then something has to intervene to permit a choice, rather than the stimulus automatically producing a response. Therefore learning has to be more than Anderson's (1995:4) definition: "a process by which relatively permanent changes occur in behavioural potential as a result of experience".

### **2.7.2 Cognitive Learning**

Learning is a constantly evolving process that increases and refines the repertoire of potential responses that it is possible to make, so that the most appropriate choice may be made. This requires reflective thinking based on past experience that can use 'creative imagination' to envision something that may (or may not) happen at some future moment, in some imagined scenario with some variable parameters. This 'what if' scenario can then be compared to the existing framework of responses to give a range of options, which can be thought through to provide potential alternative strategies for future response. Learning is about what to do in future situations. Memory is about the past. Reflection links the experience of the past to determine potential use of this experience in the future. This is more in keeping with learning as a cognitive process where meta-cognition acts as an agent to determine the choice made. Huber (1991:89) said of organisms and organisations: 'an entity learns if, through its processing of information, the range of its potential behaviours is changed.' This brings together learning as both a process and the result of experience. This is in keeping with WBL practices and is aligned with Cognitive Learning.

Starbuck and Hedberg (2001:333) describe learners as: "cognitive beings that perceive, analyse, plan and choose. ...", so "Cognitive learning incorporates perception, analysis, and choice. Learners' mental processes integrate and interpret perceptions, analyse situations, and propose alternative behaviours." This could be considered as the basis of reflection, which is an essential element of WBL.

### **2.7.3 Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives**

In 1948 Bloom started work on a Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. This was to be a framework of learning behaviours that included all aspects of learning, and that showed the hierarchical nature of them. The learning behaviours were given under three headings of Cognitive (knowledge), Affective (feelings/attitudes) and Psychomotor (skills) domains.

*The Cognitive Domain* was published in 1956, *The Affective Domain* published in 1964, and the third domain, concerned with physical skills, was not initially developed because it was considered to be outside the expertise of those involved in producing the Taxonomy.

Bloom's taxonomy (1956) is important for WBL, and indeed all learning, because it outlines different levels of learning that can be achieved successively. A learner does not necessarily always work at the highest level that s/he can attain, but working at a higher level is generally assumed to mean that the lower levels have been mastered. The use of words associated with each level can be a useful guide to the assessment of each level, although it is essential to see that it is the meaning rather than the use of the words that is assessed. A full understanding of Bloom's Taxonomy is especially useful when setting objectives for learning, and the corresponding assessment tasks to determine their attainment, as an integral part of planning.

#### **2.7.4 Adult learning**

Knowles is generally known for his book *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy versus Pedagogy* (1970), which introduces his concept of andragogy, but it is also defined in his later work *Self-directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers* (1975: 19):

(T)he body of theory and practice on which teacher-directed learning is based is often given the label "pedagogy", from the Greek words *paid* (meaning "child") and *agogus* (meaning "leader"). Pedagogy has come to be defined as the art and science of teaching, but its tradition is in the teaching of children. The body of theory and practice on which self-directed learning is based has come to be labelled "andragogy", from the combining form *anra* of the Greek word *aner* (meaning "man"). Andragogy is defined, therefore, as the art and science of helping adults (or, even better, maturing human beings) learn. These definitions do not imply that children should be taught pedagogically and adults should be taught andragogically. Rather, the two terms simply differentiate between two sets of assumptions about learners, and the teacher who makes one set of assumptions will teach pedagogically whether he or she is teaching children or adults, whereas the teacher who makes the other set of assumptions will teach andragogically whether the learners are children or adults.

This latter work by Knowles is essential reading for everyone involved in the learning process of WBL because it provides a 'how to' (or Mode 2 knowledge) resource for both learners and teachers or facilitators. The book helps everyone to maximise learning opportunities by raising issues and outlining the thinking behind the author's approach to specific tasks and the assumptions and rationale upon which the approach to learning is based. As Knowles states (1975:18):

In its broadest meaning, "self-directed learning" describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.

Self-directed learning is particularly apposite for WBL learners with its assumptions that:

- the learner's experiences are a rich resource for learning,
- the orientation of learning is task- or problem-orientated, rather than subject/discipline orientated, and
- learners are intrinsically motivated, rather than extrinsically motivated.

For WBL it is important to consider the needs of the adult learner. Knowles (1984) identified four characteristics of adult learners as having a:

- self concept tending towards self-direction
- growing reservoir of experience
- developmental readiness to learn and
- problem-centred, present reality orientation to learning.

These characteristics are useful for gaining experience, known as Mode 2 learning (Gibbons *et al*, 1994) within the workplace, and they are the characteristics that WBL learners bring to the classroom.

Individual learners have preferred learning styles (visual, auditory or kinaesthetic), and multiple intelligences, attributed to Gardner (1993), but initially postulated by Polanyi (1958). These can be used to advantage through negotiated learning using experiential learning and a constructivist approach (building on what is known already).

Kolb's experiential learning cycle model (Kolb, 1984) includes a sequence of four ways of perceiving and processing that must be present for learning to occur:

Pragmatist – Concrete Experience.

Reflector – Reflective Observation

Theorist – Abstract Conceptualisation

Activist – Active Experimentation

The descriptors pragmatist, reflector, theorist and activist were first used by Honey and Mumford in the 1970's, in their Learning Styles Questionnaire based on, and similar to Kolb's earlier work. Kolb's model was developed over many years but its publication in 1984 formed the basis of his experiential learning theory, and inventory of learning styles. Kolb acknowledged the earlier influences of Piaget, Rogers and Jung. The process of WBL is often structured to follow Kolb's cycle, in that WBL courses are often set up to model the individual techniques which then reinforce the way in which people learn. The candidate starts with concrete experience in the workplace. The candidate is encouraged to observe (or visualise) and reflect on the experience before considering the underpinning theory which is then returned to the workplace, often through active experimentation which may extend the context into new situations.



### 2.7.5 WBL and pedagogy

According to Boud and Symes (2000: 22) WBL challenges the traditional approaches of universities:

Work based learning, by its very nature, throws down the gauntlet to the mainstream university, many of whose pedagogic practices such as the lecture were originally developed during the Middle Ages. These practices served a culture in which books were few and far between, and have hardly altered much in spite of the fact that books are no longer a rare commodity.

They consider (p.23) that WBL is pedagogy:

...work based learning is still an idea in search of a practice, a pedagogy that is undergoing development as it accommodates itself to the exigencies of the work place and the university.

The emphasis is, as the name implies, on learning; not on teaching.

Walsh (2011:127) refers to Leycock (1993:24) who recommends the need for a shift from: “didactic to facilitative teaching from dependent to autonomous study, from transmission to interpretation, from authoritarian to the democratic”, before she stresses the importance of this changing perspective for: “the context of mature professional adult learners whose primary identity is as ‘worker’ rather than ‘student’.”

Walsh considers these mature adults to have a range of work and life skills and experiences:

...that support them in their studies. Such learners require a very different approach from academic staff to that adopted when inducting a group of relatively inexperienced 18-year-olds into an academic discipline. In such a model the relationship between the academic and the learner is much more egalitarian than that of ‘expert’ to ‘novice’, and it is important that staff/student interactions reflect this difference through recognition of the competence and expertise work-based learners bring to the university, rather than focusing solely on the academic expertise already there.

The reference of expert to novice refers to the Dreyfus (1986) model of skills acquisition which moves from novice to advanced beginner to competent to proficient to expert. The expert no longer relies on rules, guidelines or maxims; has an intuitive grasp of situations based on deep tacit understanding; uses analytical approaches only in novel situations or when problems occur, and has a vision of what is possible.

The work based learner may be more of an expert in their specialist line of work but the academic can facilitate the sharing of the tacit understanding through reflection. Eraut (1994:156) discusses two meanings of reflection as a thought process, based on a dictionary definition, and says: “The first of these meanings treats reflection as a form of deliberation while the second treats it as a form of metacognition. Both are important contributors to professional expertise”.

## 2.8 Motivation

### 2.8.1 Relevance to this research

The Government force driving the up-skilling of workers for industry's success considers the worker as a commodity, needing to reach a measurable standard to be of use. Employers must provide professional development opportunities to comply with government requirements for legislated standards. Employers also need higher standards of skills within the ever-changing workplace to

- keep up with changing technology;
- maximise the potential of their employees to increase efficiency; and
- reduce recruitment costs through increased retention.

HEIs are advantaged by diversifying into new markets (or expanding existing markets) at a time of demographic and economic change. This diversification can meet the needs of both government and employers by forming, or continuing long-term partnerships with employers. Providing courses that give suitable solutions to employer needs opens possibilities for developing the partnership to higher levels later. However, the worker becoming a candidate is central to this scheme working to the benefit of government, employers and HEIs. Assumptions are made that the worker will want to acquire skills, opportunities for learning and empowerment, with potential for higher levels of employment and income. The worker must want to become a candidate, and this is linked with motivation. Harvey (2007:33) says:

Indeed there is a tension between the learning goals of the individual and the workforce development aims of employers (Garrick and Usher, 2000). To achieve a real change in the balance of power between learners, universities and employers will require this tension to be understood and accommodated within new curriculum developments.

### 2.8.2 Motivation of the learner

The motivation of the learner is important for a successful outcome. Motivation is relevant to this research where the employer forms the partnership and is involved in the design of the learning, so is the initial client, but the learner is the employee. Brown (2007:1-2) noted that businesses wanted to improve economic performance, conform to legislative requirements, and prepare employees for new processes or enhanced roles; they did not relate learning to academic levels, nor were they interested in whole qualifications. Individuals, however, wanted to consolidate professional qualifications with portable awards. If the learning is to be successful the employee needs to be a willing, motivated learner, rather than a reluctant participant. The involvement or active participation of the employee-learner in initial discussions may be an important consideration for successful partnership arrangements.

### 2.8.3 Gifted and Talented pedagogy for WBL

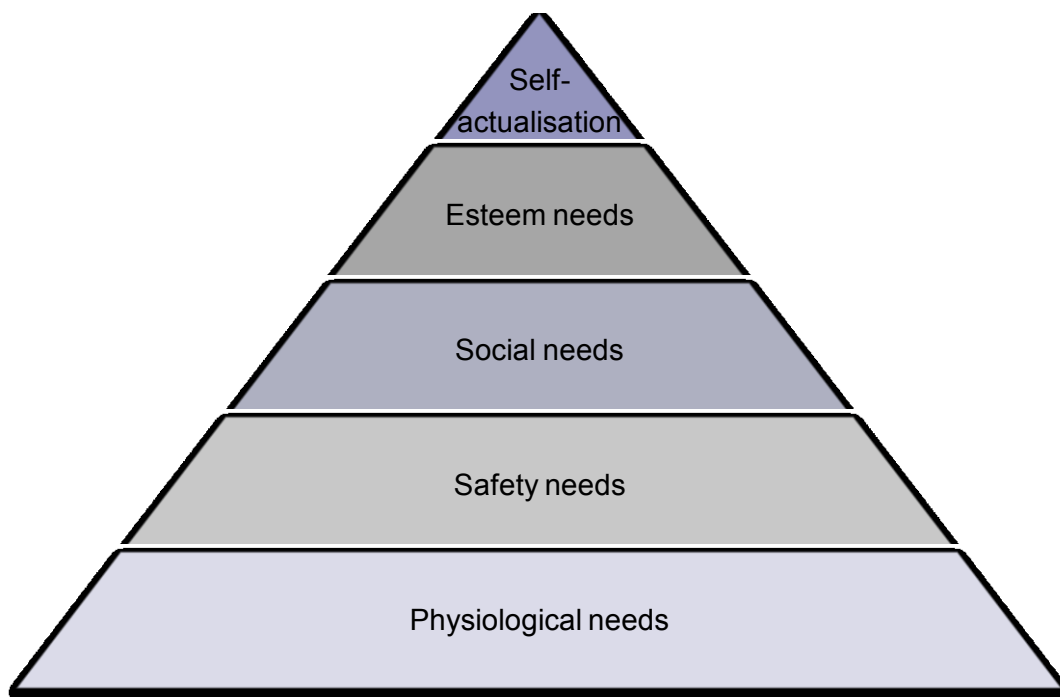
Gagné (1991) showed that both motivation and tenacity were essential for gifted and talented children to move from having gifts, to becoming talented by using these gifts. Without either the motivation, or the tenacity, gifted and talented children invariably fail to achieve. Gagné also advocated differentiated learning, with one task set for a number of learners who may perform at varying levels, but the learning level can be differentiated by outcome. This is akin to the open shell nature of some WBL modules, or assessments, where a candidate considers a project within the workplace. The basic structures of projects may be similar, but the outcome will be dependent upon many factors, including the level of understanding that is evidenced in the report on the project. However, motivation and tenacity are required to complete the project.

### 2.8.4 Maslow's hierarchy of human needs

For motivation in terms of self-fulfilment or self-actualisation through learning, then the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs must first be fulfilled.

Maslow's hierarchy is usually illustrated as a triangle, with self-actualisation at the apex, although Maslow (1970:15-31) did not represent it in this way. Each lower level of need must be met before striving for the level above. The lowest level is based on biological and physiological needs, which are essential for survival for all forms of life. When these are met then progress can be made in terms of safety needs, then social needs or belongingness, then esteem, and finally self-actualisation.

**Figure 2.3 Maslow's hierarchy of human needs**



### **2.8.5 Employee parallels**

Although this model over-simplifies the complexity of human needs and interactions, it is useful in identifying the relevant elements and can be related to the needs of an employee who has potential learning opportunities. The employee requires the security of work to meet physiological needs of survival, which corresponds to Maslow's lowest level. Next there are safety needs. The organisation has to fulfil certain statutory requirements, and the employee is likely to accept those. Being valued by the organisation sufficiently to be accepted onto a course, may give the employee a sense of belongingness which satisfies social needs. Being part of a network within the cohort enables the candidate to share expertise, and this correlates to esteem. Personal success within the course raises the candidate to the level of self-actualisation, and self-fulfilment.

### **2.8.6 Motivation, extrinsic rewards and knowledge management**

Kunzmann and Schmidt (2009) focus on ICT systems are but interested in motivational aspects of knowledge management. Their understanding of knowledge maturing as the advancement of knowledge where learning is on a collective level encompassing teams, communities, or organisations is based on an article by Maier and Schmidt (2007). The latter article is also significant for this thesis: personal development and knowledge management approaches are connected by their common link with e-learning, which has similarities to both personal development, and knowledge management.

Maier and Schmidt (2007) explain the similarities and differences between knowledge management and e-learning approaches:

Knowledge management (KM) and e-learning (EL) are both approaches that intend to improve construction, preservation, integration, transfer and (re-) use of knowledge and competencies. ... Whereas e-learning and personnel development have their foundations in (learning) psychology, (media) didactics and (learning) pedagogy and emphasize the importance of structural (by preparing learning material) or personal guidance, knowledge management envisions an organizational memory or organizational knowledge base into which the individual's knowledge is supposed to be made explicit and which is the basis for (more or less unguided) "knowledge transfer" (p.1-2).

Kunzmann and Schmidt (2009) acknowledge that: "Little investigation has taken place for workplace settings where informal learning and the integration of learning and working are dominating elements". Their ethnographically-informed study investigates barriers for knowledge maturing activities by observing mainly informal learning activities, focusing more on collective than individual benefit. Their findings include motivators of "curiosity and personal interest, membership in a community, money, personal standards, status and power." The barriers were: "usability (of software systems), regulations (by the organization), workload and lack of resources, geographical barriers, lack of help, lack of money, personal attitude, competition, team culture".

### 2.8.7 Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction

Keller (1987), who coined the term 'motivational design' for educational settings, introduces his ARCS model that identifies Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction as motivational factors. Keller (2000) outlines a lesson planning strategy <http://mailer.fsu.edu/~jkeller/Articles/Keller%202000%20ARCS%20Lesson%20Planning.pdf> [accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2011] that uses

- **attention** to capture the interest of the learner and to stimulate an attitude of inquiry,
- **relevance** to maintain the interest of the learner,
- **confidence** as a progressive way of moving from the initial objectives, *via* a task to reach an achievable outcome by building positive expectations for success where the learning experience supports or enhances the students' beliefs in their competence, with success based upon their own efforts and abilities, and hence leads onto intrinsic
- **satisfaction** where they can use their newly acquired knowledge and skills, to achieve extrinsic rewards that reinforce the successes, and that through equity help build a positive feeling about accomplishments.

Candidates' motivations regarding WBL programmes in this thesis may be related to Keller's ARCS:

- **attention** is evident because candidates have applied for the programme;
- **relevance** to their work, as decided by their employer, is built into WBL through partnership negotiations;
- **confidence** from appreciating their own worth may be derived from self-reflection, their employer's investment in them and experiencing a supportive learning environment;
- **satisfaction** may come from gaining a recognised qualification and interacting with colleagues within a community of learning/practice.

### 2.8.8 Candidates' motivations

Motivations for studying given in candidates' questionnaire responses will be analysed in Chapter Four. Understanding motivations may be useful for building courses that satisfy candidates' needs. Although there are some similarities between the candidates' motivations and Kunzmann and Schmidt's (2009) research, additional money, considered as an initial motivation by Kunzmann and Schmidt, is of little interest to the majority of WBL candidates. Extrinsic incentives may motivate some people, but the effects can be short-term, problematic, and even counterproductive (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002:254:note12). Osterloh and Frey (2000:546) note that employees are motivated

intrinsically as well as extrinsically. Intrinsic motivation is crucial for transferring tacit knowledge in and between teams although the transfer:

... cannot be directly observed and the output cannot be attributed to a particular employee. At best managers can observe the result of knowledge generation and transfer in terms of output. Explicit knowledge on the other hand, is tradable. Managers are more capable of observing how well workers with individual knowledge have performed in this respect, and can reward them accordingly (p.546).

This is important because “tacit knowledge is a crucial source of sustainable competitive advantage because it is difficult for competitors to imitate” (p.539).

## 2.9 Knowledge, Learning, Work, and Organisations

WBL draws on theoretical and conceptual models from a range of transdisciplinary thinking, some of which are considered below. As a relatively new field of study WBL needs its own conceptual models or evidence to support the use of existing models within a WBL context. This research will provide perspectives of organisational learning within partnership contexts.

### 2.9.1 The distinction between knowledge and information

The distinction between knowledge and information is clarified by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995, pp. 58-59):

[I]nformation is a flow of messages, while knowledge is created by that very flow of information, anchored in the beliefs and commitment of its holder.... [K]nowledge is essentially related to human action.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995:64-73) suggest that companies could make implicit knowledge explicit by a process of socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation (as outlined above). Large companies responded by appointing Knowledge Officers with responsibilities for their company’s intellectual capital, in terms of both human capital (in individuals’ heads) and structural capital (knowledge embedded in a company’s systems).

The idea of “knowledge existing as a thing to be captured” relates back to Mode 1 knowledge, and is considered as something to be extracted from individuals and codified into routines or documents so that it can be preserved for the organisation. It is what McElroy (2002:9) calls ‘the supply side of Knowledge Management’.

[http://www.macroinnovation.com/images/McElroy\\_nkm.pdf](http://www.macroinnovation.com/images/McElroy_nkm.pdf) [accessed 26th November 2011]. By considering knowledge as having a life cycle McElroy relates its acceptance and integration into an organisation as the supply side, which corresponds to a first generation knowledge management (KM) view. However, second generation KM concentrates on creating circumstances for encouraging the creation of new knowledge, the demand side. McElroy (2003: 54) describes knowledge processing as “a set of social

processes through which people in organizations create and integrate their knowledge". This creation and integration is not the same as KM.

KM has moved from managing a 'thing' to managing a 'flow' that focuses on context and narrative, rather than on content. This becomes a social process of action leading into Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998:45). It also links in with the third component of intellectual capital: social capital, which is uniquely shared by a social group.

### **2.9.2 Organisations**

Stinchcombe (1965:146) posited a relationship between organisations and social systems, where organisations were formed as easier or better ways of doing something that could not easily be done within existing social arrangements. The original social structure tends to endure through a process of institutionalisation, or social embeddedness, a concept developed by Granovetter (1985:482). Johnson (1990:185) noted that social systems underpinning an organisation may operate to maintain a dominant paradigm, 'a set of core beliefs and assumptions', and so constrain the process of change.

Scott (1995:60) refers to his three pillars of institutions: cognitive, normative and regulative, that support organisations when he elaborates: "The models are differentiated such that each identifies a distinctive basis of compliance, mechanism of diffusion, type of logic, cluster of indicators, and foundations for legitimacy claims". One of these is generally embedded within the organisation, and tends to be learned in a similar way to tacit knowledge, rather than learned from written directives. There is a tendency for them to be self-perpetuating and resistant to change. However, leadership can change embedded thinking and practice in order for learning, and hence change, to take place.

WBL candidates participating in this research are taking management and leadership programmes and may therefore be in a position to influence future change within their organisations. Senge (1996: 291) commented that 'leaders are responsible for learning'. However, leaders need legitimacy in order to exert leadership. Scott (2001:61) points out different bases of legitimacy:

A regulative view would ascertain whether the organisation is legally established and whether it is acting in accord with relevant laws and regulations. A normative orientation, stressing moral obligations, may countenance actions departing from "mere" legal requirements. Many professionals adhere to normative standards that compel them to depart from the rule-based requirements of bureaucratic organisations.

Partnerships are instigated by people operating at high levels of leadership who want change through WBL courses. Literature about leadership and learning includes insights from Child and Heavens (2001:312), who acknowledge the importance of leaders establishing a vision that is communicated from the top to change the barriers of the past into an asset for the future, in order to create a culture that is appropriate for organisational learning.

The potential contribution of leadership to organisational learning encompasses a number of roles. The most fundamental is that of establishing a culture conducive to organisational learning, if necessary by transforming the embedded legacy of the past from a barrier to an asset. Often barriers can be broken down through the communication of a vision from the top (Kotter 1995; Strebel 1996). ...

Leaders must support the establishment of this learning culture through practices that both encourage autonomy and harness collective efforts for insight and new knowledge for the organisation to work effectively into the future. Child and Heavens (2001: 312) say:

Hence, a second leadership role in promoting organisational learning is to support the appropriate culture with a set of accompanying practices that permits the autonomy to encourage the creation of insight and new knowledge, but within a collective effort that is directed towards the present effectiveness and future opportunities of the organisation as a whole (Hamel and Prahalad 1994).

Coldwell (1996:69) notes the need for discontinuity for innovation to flourish. The economic crisis has certainly produced a sudden and discontinuous change.

Innovation occurs when there is a sudden and discontinuous change that positively differentiates the changed state from that which preceded it. ...It seems important to explore the links between innovation, creativity, time, change and competitive advantage.

### **2.9.3 Boundaries**

According to Child and Heavens (2001:317-318) organisations have internal and external boundaries that simultaneously denote differentiation and integration among those involved in organisational learning. Child and Heavens, noting Follett's incisive significance for collective learning for organisations, remarked:

Follett appreciated that conflict is a fact of social and organisational life. Her view was that conflict should be acknowledged and made to work for people, rather than hidden or ignored. In her view, conflict is the legitimate expression of differences of opinion and interest. Without these differences there would be no progress (Graham 1995:19-20). This perspective suggests that bringing together people from disparate organisational roles, specialties, and backgrounds should enrich the learning process.

Although this suggestion of bringing people together should enrich the learning process, according to Coopey (1996: 348-67), integration across internal boundaries may present a barrier to learning because of embedded norms and practices.

The WBL participants within this thesis include employees from different directorates or departments within their respective organisations. Many of these candidates did not know each other before starting their programme. Awareness of an organisation's internal as well as external barriers enables a better understanding of observations of cohorts working either collaboratively or contesting learning, and the literature signals the possibility of embedded norms and practices presenting a barrier to learning.



In terms of external boundaries, Powell, Koput, and Smith-Doerr (1996: 116) indicate:

When the knowledge base of an industry is both complex and expanding, and the sources of expertise are widely dispersed, the locus of innovation will be found in networks of learning, rather than in individual firms.

Child and Heavens (2001:320) advise:

It is vital for an organisation's capacity to innovate and to learn in new ways that it receive relevant new information from its external environment. This information can relate to all levels of organisational activity: strategic, organisational and technical.

This supports the notion that partnerships between large organisations and HEIs is likely to be mutually beneficial in terms of extending the networks for all involved.

#### **2.9.4 Boundary spanners**

Child and Heavens (2001:320-321) also acknowledge that a critical role is played by boundary spanners (Tushman, 1977; Tushman and Katz, 1980). These people work at the external boundary interfaces of their organisation to access external knowledge, interpret and refine it, and then direct it to other members of the organisation. Two major boundaries: the external boundary, and also the various internal horizontal and vertical boundaries, must be spanned so that external information can be useful for enhancing internal knowledge. Difficulties often arise because these boundary spanners are often similar in occupational specialties, social identities and language use as their external counterparts, but have difficulty in translating for colleagues across horizontal and vertical boundaries within their own organisation, including sponsors in higher management.

Boundary spanners, as interpreters, can play their part in promoting or blocking learning, but there are also social implications of knowledge. Knowledge is not just restricted to the processing of information. There are also symbolic connotations that are concerned with perceptions of various positions within the structure of organisations and the wider communities. Child and Heavens (2001:322) indicate: "The significance of information for organisational learning is not just what it literally says but also where it comes from and how its social implications are interpreted." This has implications for the research in terms of the perceptions of participants with regard to both the University and the culture within their organisation. In HEIs, there are academics and there are others who are not academics. In some instances, the difference appears to be arbitrary, without relevance to the level of responsibility, standard of qualification required, or rates of remuneration, but may for some, have significance in terms of perceived status. It is an ancient anomaly that may be a potential barrier to effective communications within HEIs.

The line between the world of work and the world of academia is not some impenetrable barrier that physically separates the two, however, for some, it is an intimidating psychological barrier that demarks the 'us' and 'them', with alien language and culture.

WBL can provide the 'passport' for crossing that barrier. The world of work can be considered just as intimidating to those in the world of academia as academia can to those in work. Academia is itself a particular category of work. The learning in terms of boundary spanning is likely to be a two-way process showing similarities as well as differences.

### **2.9.5 Social interaction and knowledge movement**

Reflective learning, an essential component of many educational experiences (Moon, 2004) stems from work by Schön (1983). It is an essential component of WBL because the learner needs to make explicit the implicit Mode 2 knowledge of work routines. Nonaka (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) considered modes of knowledge creation based on tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Knowledge is gained by the individual and can be made explicit. A socio-cognitive approach helps in understanding how individual learning moves into group learning, where social aggregates contain more knowledge than individuals do, but groups cannot use all information equally. According to Maier, Prange and Rosenstiel (2001:29):

Knowledge in organisations can be unequally distributed not only within a group but across many units as well. So that this knowledge can become part of the organisational decisions as well, it must be gathered by decision-making groups: it must become communicable, shared knowledge (Duncan & Weiss 1979, Nonaka 1994).

The need for social interaction moves individual knowledge into organisational knowledge (Wenger, 1998:251-7). WBL has the potential for increasing the level of self-awareness as it moves the implicit to the explicit; for increasing the level of learning energy as it equips candidates with new skills; and provides the time and space as well as topics of conversation for increasing mutuality or depth of social capital.

## **2.10 Soft Systems Methodology**

The complexity of inter-relationships can be mapped with Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) that gives structure to messy problems. Checkland (1985:821) explains:

Rational intervention in human affairs, if it is to constitute not only *action* but also *research*, so that future interventions may be made more effective, needs a well-defined methodological framework. Soft systems methodology (S.S.M.) provides one such framework. S.S.M. is doubly systemic: it is itself a learning system, and within that system it uses systems models, models of human activity systems. It accepts that such models are not models of the real world, only models of ways of perceiving the real world, that is to say, models relevant to debate about 'reality' (one man's 'terrorism' is another's 'freedom fighting').

SSM uses the mnemonic CATWOE to give a root definition of a situation (p.866):

C: (customers) Who are the system's victims or beneficiaries?

A: (actors) Who would do these activities?

T: (Transformative process) What input is transformed into what output?

W: (*Weltanschauung*) The world-view which makes this definition meaningful.

O: (Owners) Who could abolish this system?

E: (environmental constraints) What does this system take as given?

Rich pictures map the perspectives with the aim of finding an accommodation between different, conflicting constructions that will be both desirable and feasible as a way of moving forward.

## 2.11 Employer Engagement Partnerships

McEwen *et al* (2010) in their HE Academy commissioned report highlight some gaps in knowledge that this thesis attempts to redress. These include the role of language, communication and employers' perceptions of WBL. The report covers three types of WBL situations, two of which range beyond the boundaries of this thesis; however, the report identifies issues of employer engagement which need addressing at executive level in partnership negotiations.

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/evidence\\_informed\\_practice/integrating\\_work\\_based\\_learning](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/evidence_informed_practice/integrating_work_based_learning) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2011]

McEwen *et al* (2010:8) recommendations change focus from 'support of employers' to 'appropriate engagement' and reinforce WBL's need for clarity in the role of language, effective communications, and the central importance of relationships, which need planning to support employers. More employer engagement research is needed:

Further work is needed on the perceptions of WBL of a wider group of employers. More work also needs to go into looking at the issues related to employer engagement as these are very various, according to the type and sector of employer (p.8).

Gaps in the literature include HEI employer support and identification of best practice:

[W]hat is missing from the literature is a body of research which addresses how support is provided by HEIs for the critical role of the employer in facilitating the learning process. .... [L]ittle research has been undertaken to identify best institutional practice in communication between institutions and employers to identify and ensure 'employer support' for the student learning experience in different WBL settings (p.15).

McEwen *et al* (2010:15) in their literature summary note the lack of practical (Mode 2) knowledge and research around the mutual understanding of employer/HEI needs, and developing the relationship. The review found:

numerous studies on WBL and employer engagement from a strategic perspective, but far less on the more practical level of preparation and delivery of WBL and nothing on effective HEI support for employers (p.85).

The review identifies key themes including:

- the need to develop strong relationships between HEIs and employers for course development and design (which is an important facet of partnerships with University C);
- employers looking for value for money: a positive impact on productivity and performance;
- barriers in terms of : “cost/finance; the complexity of systems; the lack of a common language/understanding; the lack of HEI’s responsiveness and flexibility”;
- challenges of understanding each others’ needs;
- the lack of research studies providing evidence to inform practice.

This thesis will show how some of the identified issues are being addressed by the partnerships and will add to the body of research on HEI/employer engagement.

## 2.12 Previous Research Relevant to HEI/Employer Engagement

Research (Connor and Hirsh, 2009) on partnerships in SE England, gives a useful overview of conditions for successfully converting employer demand into HE supply. It does not include a public organisation, whereas this NE England research does.

In considering a wider field concerning Leadership and Partnerships, there are some useful lessons to be learned from a Consultancy Report: ‘HE Leadership of Regional and Local Regeneration Partnerships: Learning from Good Practice’ (Owen, 2007) as part of the Research and Development Series of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Ten HEI case studies from areas of economic difficulty with substantially lower than national average gross domestic product (GDP) per head, were each allocated two days of research time to review documents and interview key people. Expenditure for each HEI averaged £100million on large scale capital investment. The consultancy noted the large amount of expensive executive time required for regeneration activity, including an estimated quarter of available time of vice-chancellors or pro-vice chancellors in several case studies. Successful leaders, in terms of project successes, rather than general leadership qualities, seemed to:

- Build on firm foundations by providing appropriate analysis to lend powerful support, with examples including student demand studies and cost-benefit analyses.
- Display conviction with large, innovative, and largely uncertain projects, with uncertainties researched and reduced to a minimum, but with stakeholders wanting to know “whether the project ‘stacks up’ in a convincing way”; the details and caveats are, to them, less significant.

- Secure local support, including RDAs; Learning and Skills Councils, Business Link, local government, local business, HEFCE regional offices and Sector Skills Councils, to form a 'coalition of the willing' as a starting point for securing national funding.
- Negotiate effectively, with an ethical approach, and incremental progression employing tactics including planning a chronological order for contacts and negotiations, and considering timings, sometimes over years.
- Mobilise influence for support and successful presentation, including the channels through which it is presented to decision-makers.
- Create effective teams to reduce uncertainty through "effective planning and project management by suitably qualified experts".

There are parallels between these multi-million pound regeneration projects, and the business-facing approach of case study C, which is endeavouring to regenerate regional and local industry, through partnerships. Owen (2007:7) draws attention to the high cost of personnel involved in negotiating these projects.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are large economic entities, repositories of intellectual and leadership ability, and central to the development of business and of higher level skills. These characteristics make them especially important agents in the economic regeneration of many parts of Britain, a process that can benefit HEIs as much as local economies.

This study reviews higher education leadership of local and regional economic regeneration. It is predicated on the view that economic regeneration is important to higher education leaders: because of the benefits that it can offer to HEIs; because of the extensive high level of commitment that it requires; and because of the need to balance these two factors (Owen, 2007:5).

WBL may be an initial response to the needs of an organisation in terms of continuing professional development. This may lead to escalating partnerships concerned with regeneration. Equally, a regeneration partnership may require WBL as part of the capacity building and up-skilling of the workforce. In either case, the time required for negotiation is substantial, and as Owen has indicated, is extremely costly, especially when measured in terms of executive salaries. This supports the need for a model to shorten this negotiation time.

Owen's Report draws on Kotter (1995:21) who, in *Leading Change* contends that success in business laden with change requires strong, capable leaders and a process for "creating major change" that over-comes eight common errors that companies make. Kotter's eight-stage process is outlined below:

- Establishing a Sense of Urgency
  - Examining the market and competitive realities
  - Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities.
- Creating the Guiding Coalition
  - Putting together a group with enough power to lead the change

- Getting the group to work together like a team
- Developing a Vision and Strategy
  - Creating a vision to help direct the change effort
  - Developing strategies for achieving that vision
- Communicating the Change Vision
  - Using every vehicle possible to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies
- Having the guiding coalition role model the behaviour expected of employees
  - Empowering Broad-Based Action
  - Getting rid of obstacles
  - Changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision
  - Encouraging risk-taking and non-traditional ideas, activities and actions
- Generating Short-term Wins
  - Planning for visible improvements in performance, or 'wins'
  - Creating those wins
  - Visibly recognising and rewarding people who made the wins possible
- Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change
  - Using increased credibility to change all systems, structures and policies that don't fit together and don't fit the transformation vision
  - Hiring, promoting and developing people who can implement the change in vision
  - Reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents
- Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture
  - Creating better performance through customer- and productivity-oriented behaviour, more and better leadership, and more effective management
  - Articulating the connections between new behaviours and organisational success
  - Developing means to ensure leadership development and succession.

Kotter's eight-stage process may be relevant to each of the three case studies at a time when all large organisations are experiencing the first stage, a sense of urgency, due to the global economic crisis and rapid technological change. This will be discussed further in the final chapter, on page 229.

## 2.13 Transformation

This research is not just about partnerships converting demand into supply; it is about partnership-negotiated WBL impacting candidates, their jobs, and possibly their organisation. Mezirow (1991:183) considers transformative learning as creating new meanings that are "more inclusive, integrative, discriminating and open to alternative points of view" developed through challenging previous assumptions. Research e.g. Moore (2009:79-80) has shown the transformative difference WBL has made to candidates' lives. If this phenomenon of transformation can also occur within an organisation the potential benefits of transformed employees working in a transformed organisation would offer considerable opportunities for success in a recovering global economy.

Global market changes require responsiveness from employers with up-skilled employees to maximise new knowledge-led potential. Partnership interventions are intended to develop capacity and capability (Leitch, 2006) to increase economic, intellectual and

practical advantages (DIUS, 2008). The sooner partnership activity starts, the greater its impact. This highlights the need for understanding the requirements of the partnerships, and their role in economics, regeneration and sustainability.

According to Mezirow (1991) workplace learning can be classified into three forms:

- Instrumental learning: skill development and improving productivity;
- Dialogic learning: learning about the organisation and individual's place in it;
- Self-reflective learning: learning promoting understanding self in the workplace, one's identity and need for self-change involving a transformation of the way a person looks at self and relationships.

Organisations with well-educated workers able to respond quickly to new market forces, new technology, and even global changes, are likely to be sustainable. HEI/Employer partnerships can educate the workforce by tailoring provision to the needs of both individuals and organisations.

## 2.14 The culture of change and the need for flexible systems

A Confederation of British Industry (CBI) commissioned report (2009)

[http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Documents/Reachingfurther%20\(1\).sflb](http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Documents/Reachingfurther%20(1).sflb) [viewed 02/06/09] via [www.cbi.org.uk](http://www.cbi.org.uk) highlights examples of good practice in high quality workforce training employer engagement with FE, including maximising college resources to raise workforce skills levels. Analysis of the 2008 CBI/Edexcel skills survey of more than 600 employers, plus good practice identified in case studies, lead to ways of strengthening employer-college partnerships. Although concerned with Further Education (FE) rather than HE the report may have some relevance to this thesis. Conclusions include:

- Commitment to employer engagement in a college's strategies should permeate through the college's approach and activities;
- A reputation for sectoral expertise can be a major asset;
- Dialogue with employers on training issues must be based on skills needs and conducted in business language;
- Colleges need to maintain flexibility to adapt to inevitable changes in training provision;
- Employers need to appreciate the value placed on formal qualifications by employees and colleges.

## 2.15 Comments on Government Policy and its implications for HE

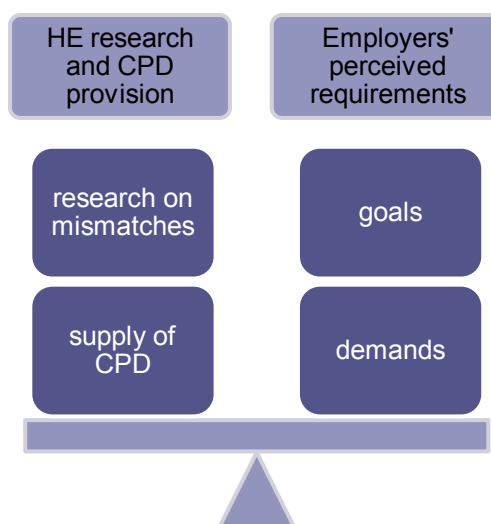
### 2.15.1 A potential regional balancing role

*Ambition 2020* (UKCES, 2009:139-149) indicated a mismatch between future predictions of skill requirements and actual supply. The Skills and Employer Policy shows a pivotal

balance point between the four interlocking components of the new strategic framework that includes goals, demand, supply and mismatches. If HEIs use their knowledge and contacts within their regions, research could determine where the mismatches lie, presenting a possibility of HEIs stabilising the balance by providing appropriate supply, and also helping employers to realise probable demand, to reduce mismatches.

Partnerships could become the fulcrum for balance by meeting matches for goals, instead of allowing mismatches to unbalance the supply/demand system within the Region.

**Figure 2.4 Partnerships as the fulcrum for balance within the region**



HEIs have the capability to research the Region's requirements and to monitor local changes in trends to ensure the availability of a workforce equipped with appropriate skills. However, partnerships would need to be incredibly strong and resilient, based on trust, with people and their organisations working together rather than in competition. Where an organisation both determines and supplies what is required there would need to be strong ethical safeguards in place, as well as considerable transparency.

Work Based Learning has moved from being a mode of study on the remote edges of higher education, to a field of study and subject area in its own right that could be considered to be at the leading edge of the new directions universities are taking *en route* to 2020 (Fisher, 2010:40).

### 2.15.2 HEFCE Pump-priming funding

The role of HEFCE in moving WBL into a position of higher prominence in an increasing number of universities cannot be underestimated: the provision of pump-priming funding



for setting up infrastructure, as with case study C, and in co-funding programmes set up in partnership with employers has been significant in this respect. Although employer engagement has been co-funded, and employers have paid their part for the employee's education, the actual contract for learning is between the 'student' and the University. From an ethical position student motivations and the student experience need to be at the centre of decisions about learning and this is a focus for HEIs.

## 2.16 Impact

A number of research papers that include 'impact' in the title give no definition of the term. In Annex A Survey of UUK/GuildHE institutions (p.3) of *Student Charter Group Final Report* January, 2011 (Chaired by Janet Beer and Aaron Porter) <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/higher-education/docs/s/11-736-student-charter-group.pdf> [Accessed 12th December 2011] 'impact' would appear to be used as 'benefit', without any negative expectation, although a free comment section followed:

### **e) Impact**

What do you see as the main benefits of your student charter/ contract/ agreement?

How has it helped a) staff and b) students?

### **f) Free Comments Section (ALL)**

Do you have any other comments about the use of student charters/ contracts/ agreements, or any other points which you would like to raise?

The formal HE meaning of 'impact' for this research was approached by looking at definitions that were being developed:

1. HEFCE's definitions of impact in developing the Research Excellence Framework were reviewed;
2. The Oxford Internet Institute (OII) was considering the impact of online resources.

### **2.16.1 Research about impact: 1) HEFCE's impact statement**

HEFCE [http://hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/2009/rd23\\_09/rd23\\_09.pdf](http://hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/2009/rd23_09/rd23_09.pdf) [accessed 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2010] short-listed four impact frameworks. The final choice was based on the Australian Research Qualification Framework (RQF) which defined impact as "the social, economic, environmental and/or cultural benefit of research to end users in the wider community regionally, nationally and/or internationally" (Grant *et al* 2009:5).

In terms of principles, the RQF say:

The assessment of research impact is an incentive for researchers to focus on the outcomes of their research insofar as these provide benefit to Australia's society, economy, environment and/or culture (Grant *et al* 2009:7).

It was decided to opt for a qualitative/case study approach and they concluded that impact metrics could not be used as a proxy for determining impact. Instead they provided an indicative list of potential indicators (Grant *et al* 2009:9).

When the RQF (Australian Government DEST, 2007) was piloted in three Australian universities, materials were prepared for presenting 'best practice' case studies, as well as a context report. It was also acknowledged that it would need to be an assessment of a sample of impact outcomes, not a measurement of the total impact achieved.

The 'Impact Statement' (Grant *et al* 2009:10) addresses four key questions:

- How has the Research Grouping engaged with end users to address a social, economic, environmental and/or cultural issue(s)?
- What new products, policies, legislation, paradigm, attitudes, outlooks, etc have end users adopted, implemented and/or taken up as a result of engaging with Research Groups?
- What are the social, economic, environmental and/or cultural benefits of the new product, policy, legislation, paradigm, attitude, outlook, etc adopted by end users?
- What is the magnitude or extent of social, economic, environmental and/or cultural benefit to end users as a result of the implemented research?

The RQF (Grant *et al* 2009:11) also identified a number of potential indicators that could be summed up as reducing negative forces such as pollution, increasing positive forces such as repeat business or increased employment, and changes in processes or ways of thinking.

The final recommendations (Grant *et al* 2009:vi) included:

- HEFCE should consult widely and then provide a definition of how it defines impact
- Because of the imperfections of both quantitative and qualitative measures, HEFCE should use a combination of the two, such as using case studies or narratives supported by possible proxy indicators of impact as proposed for the RQF.

#### **2.16.2 What can be gleaned from the HEFCE report?**

1. If a national body, HEFCE, has difficulty in defining impact, then actually measuring it is likely to be problematic, since something must be defined before it can be measured. This indicates a qualitative approach that describes the impact, rather than a quantitative approach that attempts to measure the impact.
2. Awareness of potential indicators (as provided by HEFCE) may be helpful when analysing data, to signpost possible connections, although they may not be relevant within the WBL context. The indicators can be categorised as reducing negative forces, increasing positive forces, or innovating in terms of finding new ways of doing things or thinking about things. They span economic, environmental, social and cultural domains.

3. HEFCE took a case study approach to determine impact evaluation approaches. This reinforces the decision to use case studies for determining impact within this thesis. The report says that case studies are illustrative, rather than intended to measure the total impact of an HEI, and an illustrative, descriptive approach was also taken in this research.
4. RQF defined 'impact' as: "The social, economic, environmental and/or cultural benefit of research to end users in the wider community regionally, nationally and/or internationally." This definition introduces the notion of end users.

This research is about impact of WBL. Measuring the impact of a force in the physical world would depend upon definitions and units of measurement. It is even more complicated when considering the impact of a resource used within the social world because impact is not restricted to the use of the resource. Measuring the time a person spends using a resource, or counting how many people use a particular resource, may indicate something about the potential influence of the resource, but it is not a measure of impact. When faced with a complex concept, it is useful to see how others tackle research about the same concept in different contexts.

### **2.16.3 Research about impact: the Oxford Internet Institute**

The Oxford Internet Institute (OII) acknowledges the difficulty of measuring the impact of online resources. It is not as straightforward as measuring popularity or frequency of use, especially when these resources are intended for a specific, specialised audience. However, their statement links the concept of impact to effective efforts to provide 'scholarly material' by both content providers and funding agencies. The way that they tackle the problem is by using case studies.

Measuring the impact of online resources is a tricky business. While content providers and funding agencies are increasingly interested in learning whether their efforts to provide scholarly material online are proving effective, many scholarly resources cannot be measured in the same simplistic way that the popularity of a general audience website might be gauged ... Nevertheless, for many of these specialist resources, it is clear that they are having an impact, both for their intended audiences and often in unanticipated ways  
<http://microsites.oii.ox.ac.uk/tidsr/measuring-impact> [accessed 14th April, 2011].

Taking the OII's linking of impact to effective effort to provide something, in this case 'scholarly material', still does not give a satisfactory way of looking at impact. It is rather like leading a horse to water, and ensuring that there is a good supply available, but not knowing whether the horse will drink. Even the most efficient provision does not, by itself, guarantee that there will be an impact.

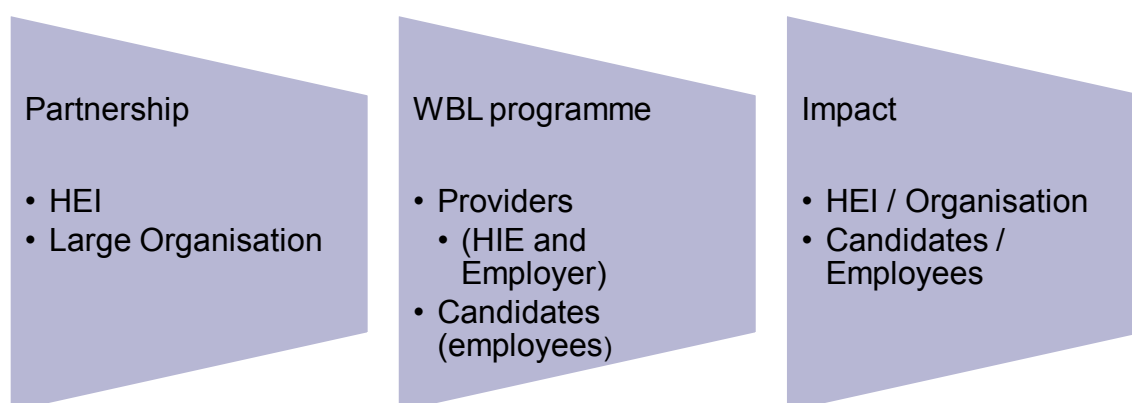
### **2.16.4 A hybrid definition of impact**

If contributions from both the OII and HEFCE are combined, then the impact may be considered as the 'benefit' to the 'end user' of the 'efficiently produced' 'scholarly material'.

This initial impact would be on the candidates (or employees of the large organisation). However, as these candidates are also ‘service providers’ the impact could also be considered as the benefit to the candidates’ efficiently produced service provision, for their end users.

This hybrid definition would have a dual purpose: it could consider the HEI’s impact as acting on the candidate, and the other partnership organisation’s impact as acting on the end user. However, this is a simplistic model that starts to define impact, but it is not a complete answer.

**Figure 2.5 WBL Impact on Candidates**



**Figure 2.6 Impact of Candidate’s WBL on End User.**



HEI/employer engagement has an implicit structure, as far as WBL is concerned. It implies a process, in that ‘something is done’ – the organisations engage for a purpose; it implies a product: the product is a WBL course, for whatever purpose the organisations negotiate; it implies an outcome: a manifestation of the original purpose. For the university the purpose is to supply the employer with an appropriate WBL course, to produce the desired outcome for the candidates, on behalf of the organisation, to meet a need of the organisation. For the organisation: the purpose is to meet some need that involves its employees; the process involves negotiation with the university to decide how these needs can be met; the product is a WBL course (or programme) / accreditation for the employees; and the outcome is employees who should better meet the needs of the organisation.

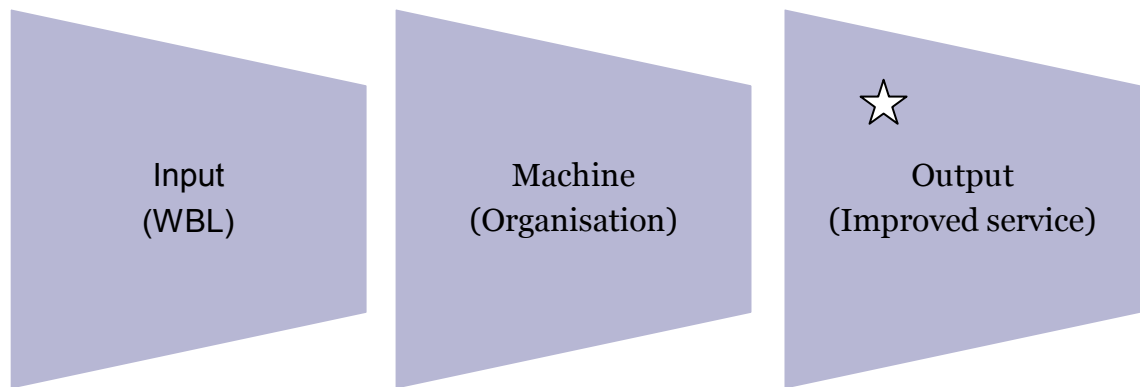
**Figure 2.7: Summary of HEI/employer engagement for WBL**

HEI/employer engagement for WBL	Purpose	Process	Product	Outcome
HEI	<p>To do business</p> <p>To engage with organisations</p> <p>To meet the needs of the external organisation</p>	<p>Negotiate to ascertain the needs of the organisation</p> <p>Meet those needs in an ethical, cost-effective way</p>	<p>Appropriate WBL course / accreditation for employees (candidates) that meets the employer's needs and the candidates' needs</p>	<p>Meets negotiated needs of organisation for organisation's purpose</p> <p>Maintains / extends business relationship</p>
Organisation	<p>To meet needs of</p> <p>shareholders / government by improving service / efficiency / productivity / profitability ....</p> <p>Of legislation</p> <p>Of employees: CPD / H&amp;S / induction ...</p>	<p>Negotiate appropriate WBL to meet the needs of employees in order to improve some aspect of the business in order to meet the needs of the shareholders / government</p>	<p>Appropriate WBL course / accreditation for employees (candidates) that meets the employer's needs and the candidates' needs</p>	<p>Higher levels of skills for employees.</p> <p>Certification.</p> <p>Fulfilment of legal requirements</p>

Another indicator of successful implementation of a new input for an organisation may be to focus on an improvement for either the end user, if a service, or an end product: to see if it is better, cheaper, faster (Kotter, 1995); alternatively Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland, P. & Scholes, J. 1990) may be used (discussed earlier on page 62).

If the WBL course is considered as a new input into the organisation a successful output could be judged as an improved service or product. This view would consider the organisation as a machine. Modifying Figure 3.4 to become Figure 3.6 illustrates the mechanistic approach that some may use to judge success, with the focus being on the third panel.

**Figure 2.8: Mechanistic measure of success**



However, the point of interest for this research is the organisation, rather than the organisation's output; it is its people and its processes, rather than its products; the interest is in revealing what happens within the organisation, rather than looking to see what emerges from the organisation. The research is about the impact on the organisation, and how the learning of the individual becomes part of the organisation so that the output can improve. The focus is on the middle panel below; it is concerned with how the workings of the organisation are impacted in order to change the output. To put this into social, rather than physical terms, these workings could be considered as the learning within the organisation.

**Figure 2.9: The research focus is on the organisation**



## 2.17 Disciplines and employability

Universities are traditionally about subject disciplines. These are grouped together in schools or faculties, and as these tend to be the basis of funding, and as power tends to be aligned with funding, some universities may lack a cohesive direction when faced with the need to institutionalise WBL which can cut across all disciplines. Portwood, in Boud

and Solomon (2001: 84) describes a number of factors contributing to the success of WBL when it was introduced at Middlesex University.

Many of these would apply to any form of institutional curriculum development, such as determining the resources, especially appropriately qualified staff that are available, or how it will advance the institution's reputation and economic interests. And so on.

Work –based learning, however, involves radical change. It changes institutional regulations, redefines the institution's curriculum, reconfigures learning relationships and introduces new practices.

WBL can also be linked with employability. This is an emerging trend in the UK, as it was in Australia, about 7 years earlier. An indicative list of employability skills taken from an Australian university web site <http://www.usq.edu.au/qualgrad> last updated on 11th August, 2009 included:

- Independent lifelong learning; effective problem solving; knowledge and skills relevant to future needs;
- Discipline expertise - evidence of analytical engagement with the theoretical knowledge;
- Professional practice - evidence of the skills required for work;
- Global citizenship - evidence of ability to connect discipline-based theory and practice to the sustainability of communities, economies and environments in a global context ;
- Scholarship - capabilities to make a scholarly contribution to workplace and wider communities;
- Lifelong learning - evidence of independent, life-long learning;
- Skills: ethical research and inquiry; problem-solving; academic and professional literacy; written and oral communication; interpersonal skills; teamwork; cultural literacy; management, planning and organisation skills; creativity, initiative and enterprise; sustainable practice.

It could be argued that WBL candidates already have these skills; or alternatively that these 'graduate attributes' or skills are essential to WBL, or indeed, any university study. However, the attributes listed miss such things as 'work-life balance' (although it could be considered under 'sustainable practice'); the ability to be a reflective thinker; the capacity to care for others; the ability to critique; the resilience to bounce back after adversity; the tenacity that is essential to see difficult tasks through; the wisdom to know when enough is sufficient; the realism to understand what is relevant; together with a futures orientation that can help to embrace change and adapt to the unknown, and may also lead to the 'greater good'; additionally, they restate the traditional focus on one discipline.

Although important, the list misses something that is at the heart of WBL. These people already have jobs, and most want affirmation of what they do; they want to do whatever they do really well, taking a pride in their job, by doing the best they can. In most cases it is not money, nor responsibility that is the driver. Work-life balance is more important to some, as is reputation, and other people's acknowledgement of what they do/how they do it. For others, the passion for what they do is their reward. Employability skills are all part of the M1 knowledge package for 'traditional' 18-21 year olds, that can be put into

practice. The M2 'know how' that WBL candidates bring with them may already include most of the 'employability skills'. Although these may be made explicit, and enhanced through reflection and other WBL processes including understanding theoretical M1 knowledge, WBL is not just about 'employability skills'. If all candidates had high aspirations and high levels of self-motivation the majority would have followed the 'traditional' route, and it is not always just bad luck, or other responsibilities, that prevent this - for some it was the right choice at that time, in the same way that WBL may be the right choice at this time. People change. These routes are actually different for different people with different needs at different times. There may be more than one 'right way'. Employability skills are important within the educational sphere, especially for those who are embarking on new careers. However, M1 knowledge needs to be put into practice. Work Based Learners have capability developed from practice, but may need to see the bigger picture and to understand M1 theory in order to make the implicit explicit, and to develop their capacity. To consider 'Employability' as the focus of direction for take-up of WBL is likely to confuse the issue within HE that may categorise WBL in the traditional mould of thinking, rather than emphasising new approaches that could change the culture of HE. The label 'Employability' may be dismissed as irrelevant by the very people who would be most likely to benefit from WBL, and especially those who have previously been denied access to HE.

## 2.18 Change

Pennington's (2003) 'Guidelines for Promoting and Facilitating Change' overviews requirements for promoting and facilitating change within HEIs as a practical resource, underpinned by theoretical and professional literature. It complements *Change Thinking: Change Practices* (2003) published four months earlier.

Guidelines are based on:

- the necessity to understand change as a complex social process
- the imperative of creating a culture in which existing work practices can be critiqued, modified and, where appropriate, abandoned
- the need to develop or secure facilitation and change agent skills to initiate, promote and embed new practices. (p.2)

Pennington considers that:

Change is a constant and unavoidable feature of personal, professional and organisational life which arises from successive waves of

- social, economic and political pressures
- discovery and technological innovations
- new consumer demands
- shifts in market patterns
- changes in policy, regulations and legal frameworks
- environmental disasters (p.4).



Pennington (2003:4) posits that survival for both individuals and organisations is not guaranteed, and that it: “falls to the most adaptable rather than the strongest.” He also considers that changes perceived as positive and stimulating are small, willingly absorbed, readily accommodated and “are often described as growth, development, progress [or] learning.”

Pennington considers that the complex interaction of many policy initiatives concerning change in HE need to be managed skilfully at all levels of an institution:

The ability to manage change successfully is a core skill in the present environment and effective change management requires the deployment of a wide range of planning, operational, communication and people skills. These skills need developing at all levels within institutions and are not the prerogative or distinguishing feature of those identified formally as managers or leaders. Widespread competence and confidence to manage a change progress is essential to many quality improvement projects and underpins the capacity of staff to make a difference or add value in terms of core activities such as teaching and programme level curriculum renewal (p.4).

Many change projects are unsuccessful due to difficulty in gaining commitment and embedding new initiatives because: “structures, procedures, attitudes and behaviours underpinning the status quo have often taken years to lay down and are not susceptible to overnight transformations.” A relevant quotation for this research then follows: “Overt changes in practice occur after the shifts in attitude which precede and generate them” (p.5).

Pennington points out that resistance to change is normal and to be expected and needs to be managed sensitively. Because “individuals and groups perceive shifts in power, authority, influence and territory”, successful change “requires sensitivity to political and human dimensions of organisational life” (Pennington, 2003:5).

Pennington (2003:5) also says:

Failure to engage with, and resolve, these latter elements during the transitional process frequently leads to ‘cosmetic’ or ‘surface’ change and compliant behaviour lacking in authenticity. Commitment to self-identified and self-initiated change is always greater than change deemed necessary by others or imposed from external sources.

Pennington’s work is highly relevant to this research because:

- change is defined as a complex social process;
- change is brought about by waves that are many and varied, but as with ocean waves, they can be relentless, and uncontrollable;
- change is contextualised within Higher Education;
- small positive changes are linked to learning that people readily accept;
- management of change is considered as a core skill requiring planning; operational, communication and people skills at all levels within an organisation;

- people skills and political awareness can ameliorate the perceptions of “shifts in power, authority, influence and territory” to help others to commit to real change that is self-identified or self-initiated, rather than imposed;
- competence and confidence underpin the capacity of staff to make a difference or to add value;
- use within HE, large organisations, may indicate relevance for managing change within other large organisations;
- it shows links to work by Schön;
- the statement: “Overt changes in practice occur after the shifts in attitude which precede and generate them” (Pennington, 2003:5) shows need for a paradigm shift to precede cultural change, which links to Johnson’s cultural web (1992:31).

Case study C, as a consequence of SDF funding is actively participating in a process of cultural change, which needs to be managed. Not all change is major, and in need of management in order to implement it successfully. Change can be considered as an indication of impact, in terms of doing things differently, but also in terms of doing the same thing more (or less) intensively. As stated in the fourth point above: small positive changes are linked to learning that people readily accept, and this indicates that there has been some impact.

## 2.19 Justification of the need for this research

Costley, Abukari and Little (2009) identified key gaps concerning knowledge and understanding of the pedagogical issues related to WBL for people already in the workforce with regard to the contribution of HE for employee learning and organisational learning development. The review notes the lack of empirical research evidence about HE pedagogy concerning employee learning:

If this review had been based exclusively on empirical evidence it could say very little about the higher education pedagogical issues surrounding employee learning. There are no large studies and a dearth of empirical research literature (p.3).

Since this review was presented, three significant textbooks have been published, as discussed earlier (p.31). However, the review (2009:3-4) indicated a lack of:

- textbooks, theoretical texts and generic materials for learning and teaching for both work-based learners and tutors focused directly on enhancing university WBL;
- research focus on enhancing university WBL;
- literature on employer and employee perceptions and impact of WBL;
- literature directly linking WBL pedagogy with CPD and short courses;
- literature linking concept of ‘intellectual capital’ in organisational learning, university accreditation systems, company training schemes to WBL pedagogy and how universities can work with organisations towards employee development;

It was also noted that:

Academics and managers in universities do not always have a clear understanding of WBL and its different strategies and models. This may be because WBL is not a subject discipline, and the discourse and protocols it has developed are unfamiliar. They are sometimes concerned about issues of quality assurance and perceived financial risks that can act as a barrier to developing courses, but much of the evidence for this is in the grey literature. WBL pedagogy is a contested field, but only some areas of concern appear in the published literature (p.3).

Where universities have embraced WBL there are still problems in managing internal systems, which can act as a barrier to the continuation and development of existing courses, accreditation activities, consultancy services and other related WBL initiatives (p.3).

The review identified two approaches to WBL employee learning initiatives: the first, from those researching work and learning, tend to be statistical, social scientific, micro-econometric or microeconomic analyses, using time series or panel data, of training interventions including some WBL activity where the texts:

rarely acknowledge the higher education curriculum or research of the more pedagogically focused tutor/researchers in the field of WBL. These texts are more often policy oriented and relate to broad themes (for example the future of work; the learning society' work and organisational performance). They represent a specialist form of analysis, and there do not appear to be any studies that focus specifically upon the benefit to university-supported work-based learning modules and programmes (p.14).

The second approach was usually by WBL tutors researching and evaluating learning through university-led WBL modules or programmes, and identifying the benefits, pay-offs, difficulties and hindrances to WBL based on survey data, questionnaire administration or other survey tools. Reports of action-learning activities, pilots and employer engagement reflective practice summaries usually evaluated a programme of work or a time-limited, free-standing project. Criticism included the "focus on a narrow range of specific examples rather than attempting to synthesise research findings from a range of empirical work" (p.14). The theory provided by the first category of researchers underpins and supports the second category of writers who: "cite the texts of the former as a means of verifying, through their research, the pertinent learning theories that support the practice of higher education award-bearing work-based learning" (p.14).

Costley *et al* conclude:

All these represent approaches to understanding the role of university-negotiated WBL programmes in employee learning. However, there is little evidence that the reviews explicitly set out to integrate the benefit of research understanding about what works to build sufficiently the evidence base with practice-based work on pilots or close HEI-employer working on specific examples (p.15).

However, as part of HEFCE's SDF project evaluation review meetings have already taken place, and the forthcoming report will add to the growing knowledge base of WBL.

## 2.20 Summary

This chapter has confirmed that the research will address recognised gaps in the formal literature of WBL, and has outlined existing literature relevant to the research. Topics and their relevance are given below:

1. Government policy has developed over time, leading to HE WBL provision for the Knowledge Economy, with HE/employer engagement partnerships providing a potential solution for CPD that builds skills and shifts the focus from a supply to a demand system, with consequent reductions in Government funding. This has given the political policies and economic considerations that contextualise the research and its situation in time, while looking towards the future; and in place within a regional, national and global location.
2. From the viewpoint of engaging the candidate in the learning process, there are issues that need to be considered, including:
  - a. the motivation of the candidate which is key to the success of WBL;
  - b. the confusion of language which can act as a barrier and may prevent initial access to HE;
  - c. individual learning, with self-actualisation, and intrinsic motivation leading to knowledge management and leadership; organisational learning; pedagogy; andragogy; and behavioural and cognitive approaches to the psychology of learning; which all play a part in the delivery of WBL programmes.
3. Epistemology shapes ways of knowing. Mode 1 theoretical knowledge and Mode 2 practical knowledge (with its transdisciplinary, transient nature, relationship to communities of practice and potential for socially distributed knowledge production through use of tacit knowledge and reflective learning for knowledge production) are both essential to WBL, and to the research in terms of understanding how individuals and organisations may be impacted.
4. Reflexive thinking and increasing self-awareness, transformation and the culture of change are another set of interrelated concepts that are also essential components of WBL but may also be outcomes of WBL for the individual. They are different from the learning consideration in point 2 above which can be considered as inputs, whereas the concepts in point 5 are outputs.
5. Impact, employability and change are concepts that are particularly relevant from a tertiary perspective because impact is part of the Research Excellence Framework; employability is another Government focus that is part of the demand-led move where students and employers become stakeholders in their interactions with HE for their future; change is inevitable, but the need for change within HE has escalated because of demographic changes, as well as the economic changes that have been experienced by all organisations.

6. The potential for addressing complexity through SSM may be relevant for the research as a way forward in understanding more about the messy and complicated nature of how learning may move from the individual to the organisation.

The next chapter discusses Research Methodology and the way in which this research will provide evidence to fill some of the identified gaps in the research base of WBL.

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## 3 Chapter Three: Research Methodology

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### 3.1 Signposts

The chapter briefly outlines the methodology for this research before discussing various aspects in more detail. The main research question and the most appropriate methods of providing data to answer it are both considered, as are the roles of the researcher and action research for best-case studies. A rationale is given for the selection of case studies and their respondents. Grounded theory and fractal analysis are discussed as a means of data analysis before the chapter concludes with a short summary.

### 3.2 Methodology

As stated previously, a case study approach was taken to find the perspectives of individuals involved in WBL programmes negotiated through two employer engagement partnerships. The case studies were:

- A, a large public organisation;
- B, a large private organisation; and
- C, the University.

An adapted action research approach was taken with each case study to try to understand the complexities of social interactions, in keeping with a social constructivist view. It would have been impossible to become an insider-researcher within all three organisations without subterfuge, but an adapted action research approach openly involved the researcher in WBL master classes as a non-participatory observer and within the University as a student researcher.

According to Reason and Bradbury (2008;4):

Definitions of action research often emphasize an empirical and logical problem-solving process involving cycles of action and reflection, sometimes going back to Lewin's definition: 'It proceeds in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact finding about the results of the action' (1946:206).

The action research cycle (Lewin, 1946:206) was adapted because it did not complete the cycle with all participants; it captured, and possibly highlighted their experiences, rather than changed them, although potential existed for future changes. The cycle was completed for the organisations, with the analysis of the confidential responses being fed back into the organisations, enabling them to adapt future reiterations of the WBL courses if they so desire. Observations and informal conversations were used to inform the data collection: through questionnaires for case studies A and B to gather background information on participants; and through semi-structured interviews for all three case studies to gather qualitative data about the impact of the WBL. Action research (AR) will be discussed later (p. 92).

### **3.3 The Research Question**

The research question was

1. What is the impact of WBL on the organisations that participate in HEI/Employer Engagement Partnerships?

As WBL is concerned with Mode 2 knowledge, this became:

2. What is the impact of WBL's Mode 2 knowledge, in terms of impact on the Mode 2 knowledge within the organisation?

As it is the individual who participates in both the learning process and in the work of the organisation, this was expressed as:

3. What is the impact of the Mode 2 learning of the individual that impacts the Mode 2 learning of the organisation?

However, as Mode 2 knowledge is concerned with its implementation the question became:

4. How does the Mode 2 learning of the individual impact the Mode 2 learning of the organisation?

An alternative expression was:

5. How does the Mode 2 learning of the individual impact the way the organisation does things?

The questions became:

6. How, why and with what consequences does the WBL experience (arranged through HE / employer engagement partnerships) of individuals, impact the organisation in which they work?

This was re-written as:

7. How, why and with what consequences does the Mode 2 learning of individuals impact the Mode 2 learning of the organisation?

### **3.4 A theoretical approach to the research question**

An inductive approach was taken for this research. According to Bryman (2008: 11):

With an inductive stance, theory is the outcome of research. In other words, the process of induction involves drawing generalisable inferences out of observations.... To a large extent, deductive and inductive strategies are possibly better thought of as tendencies rather than as a hard-and-fast distinction.

A relatively new field of study, such as WBL, may have contested theories: their relevance cannot be demonstrated by the test of time. If a theory were contested, and were used as the basis of proof, it would make a circular argument for anyone who disputed the original premise. For this reason it did not make sense to use a deductive approach where a hypothesis was tested against a theory that was itself contested. Instead, the intention was to build new models of what was happening to the organisation as a result of employer engagement based on empirical evidence. This could lead to new theory, either in the short or long term, or not at all. This research concerned WBL that was negotiated through HE/ employer engagement, which was a criterion for choosing the Case Studies, so therefore provided empirical evidence about the impact of WBL on organisations involved in its negotiation.

Using inductive approaches with research data to lead to models, and possibly theory, was considered a useful strategy for a relatively new field of study, in this case WBL because using a process of induction had potential to make connections to new or existing theory, not previously linked to WBL. This could add to the growing theoretical base of WBL to be approved by peers. For social constructivists, this would come from a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1994), which was also in keeping with Mode 2 knowledge (Gibbons *et al*, 1994) generated within the context within which it was used, by those who used it. An inductive approach fitted with a social constructivist view.

The counter view, a deductive approach, would use theory to guide the research. A positivist process of deduction (taking a theory, creating a hypothesis, collecting data to give findings that may, or may not, confirm the theory) depended on using a widely accepted theory.

### **3.5 Data required to answer the research question**

#### **3.5.1 Quantitative or qualitative data?**

Bryman (2008: 22) outlined the orientation to theory, epistemology and ontology as deductive, positivism and objectivism for a quantitative approach to research, and as



inductive, interpretivism, and constructionism for a qualitative approach. If an inductive tendency was used with constructivist ontology, then qualitative data would be more likely than quantitative data. Practicalities such as access to potential sources of data were also important considerations because quantitative data would be most useful when using large data sets. If access to those participating in WBL partnerships was limited, due to an uncertain economic climate facing organisations, then there could be insufficient data.

In a time of less complicated economic change it might have been appropriate to consider the option of a quantitative study with economic impact as the key indicator of what was happening within the organisation. This would have required a positivist experimental approach that strongly linked cause and effect. However, in January 2009, at the beginning of the research, the economic crisis and acknowledged recession meant that organisations were facing huge drops in income, requiring drastic cuts in expenditure. Buti (2009: iii) Director-General, Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission stated:

The European economy is in the midst of the deepest recession since the 1930s, with real GDP projected to shrink by some 4% in 2009, the sharpest contraction in the history of the European Union  
[http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/publications/publication15887\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/publication15887_en.pdf)  
[Accessed 28th May, 2011].

The same report stated: "Both households' and employers' expectations with regard to the state of the labour market have been deteriorating rapidly, reaching in March 2009 unprecedented levels of pessimism" (p.37).

Economic impact was likely to be neither an appropriate measure, when survival rather than improvement was the measure of success for many businesses; nor an accurate measure when little was predictable in economic terms. Regardless of the stability of the economic situation, the most important factor in the decision about seeking mainly qualitative or quantitative data should be based on the research question, and the most appropriate type of data required for answering that question. This research focused on understanding what happened to the organisation, rather than trying to prove that something had happened, so it was evident that a qualitative approach would be required. The rationale for an inductive approach that could lead to theory, rather than one that was dependent upon theory was given above. The earlier discussion about impact being difficult to define led to a qualitative approach, because it would have been even more difficult to measure for a quantitative approach if it could not have been defined clearly. The focus on the organisation, rather than the outcomes from the organisation, suggested description as a way of revealing what was happening. Each of these factors indicated that a qualitative, rather than a quantitative approach was required. Additionally, research about work needed to acknowledge that it was within the context of work as a social setting. Description provided by people required an interpretivist approach to grasp the

subjective meaning of the social action (Bryman, 2008:16), and also social constructivist ontology. Benton and Craib (2011:231) gave their glossary entry as:

**Constructionism, constructivism** A range of approaches which treat what are commonly thought of as independent, real objects as social or cultural 'constructs'. Some constructionists extend this approach to the natural world.

Denscombe (2002:18) described interpretivism as an approach that developed from a minority position through to an established alternative to positivism over the last fifty years. He considered that it was a social creation based on the way that people made sense of the world and shaped their society through their interpretations and actions. He said:

Social reality is something that is constructed and interpreted by people – rather than something that exists objectively 'out there'. From the interpretivists' point of view the social world does not have the tangible, material qualities that allow it to be measured, touched or observed in some literal way. It is a *social* creation, constructed in the minds of people and only exists through the way people believe in it, relate to it and interpret it.

A qualitative approach was taken with this research in order to give a rich understanding of how those involved perceived the impact of WBL. When studies involved people and their institutions, the subject matter might warrant different treatment from studies concerned with the natural sciences. Interpretivism was an anti-positivist view. Bryman (2008; 15) noted that:

Von Wright (1971) has depicted the epistemological clash as being between positivism and hermeneutics (a term that is drawn from theology and that, when imported into the social sciences, is concerned with the theory and method of the interpretation of human action). This clash reflects a division between an emphasis on the *explanation* of human behaviour that is the chief ingredient of the positivist approach to the social sciences and the *understanding* of human behaviour. The latter is concerned with the empathic understanding of human action rather than with the forces that are deemed to act upon it.

This also linked with the earlier discussion (p.74) where desire for understanding focused on interpreting the human behaviour from within the organisation in preference to taking a mechanistic approach that focused on outcomes.

A greater appreciation of the situation within the organisation might have been possible from an empathic understanding of the perspectives of people working within an organisation, rather than by attempting to explain them from an external perspective. However, there were limitations in taking a hermeneutic approach because interpretations could vary between people, even when they shared similar perspectives.

According to Bryman (2008; 15-18), phenomenology, attributed to Schutz but influenced by Weber's concept of *Verstehen*, interpreted people's actions and social worlds from those people's own points of view. Another alternative influence on interpretivism came from Mead (1925) and others as the founders of symbolic interactionism, where our notion of self emerged from the way others saw us. The term symbolic interaction was first used

by Blumer (1962:188), one of Mead's students, who, as cited by Bryman (2008:17) claimed: "the position of symbolic interaction requires the student to catch the process of interpretation through which [actors] construct their actions"

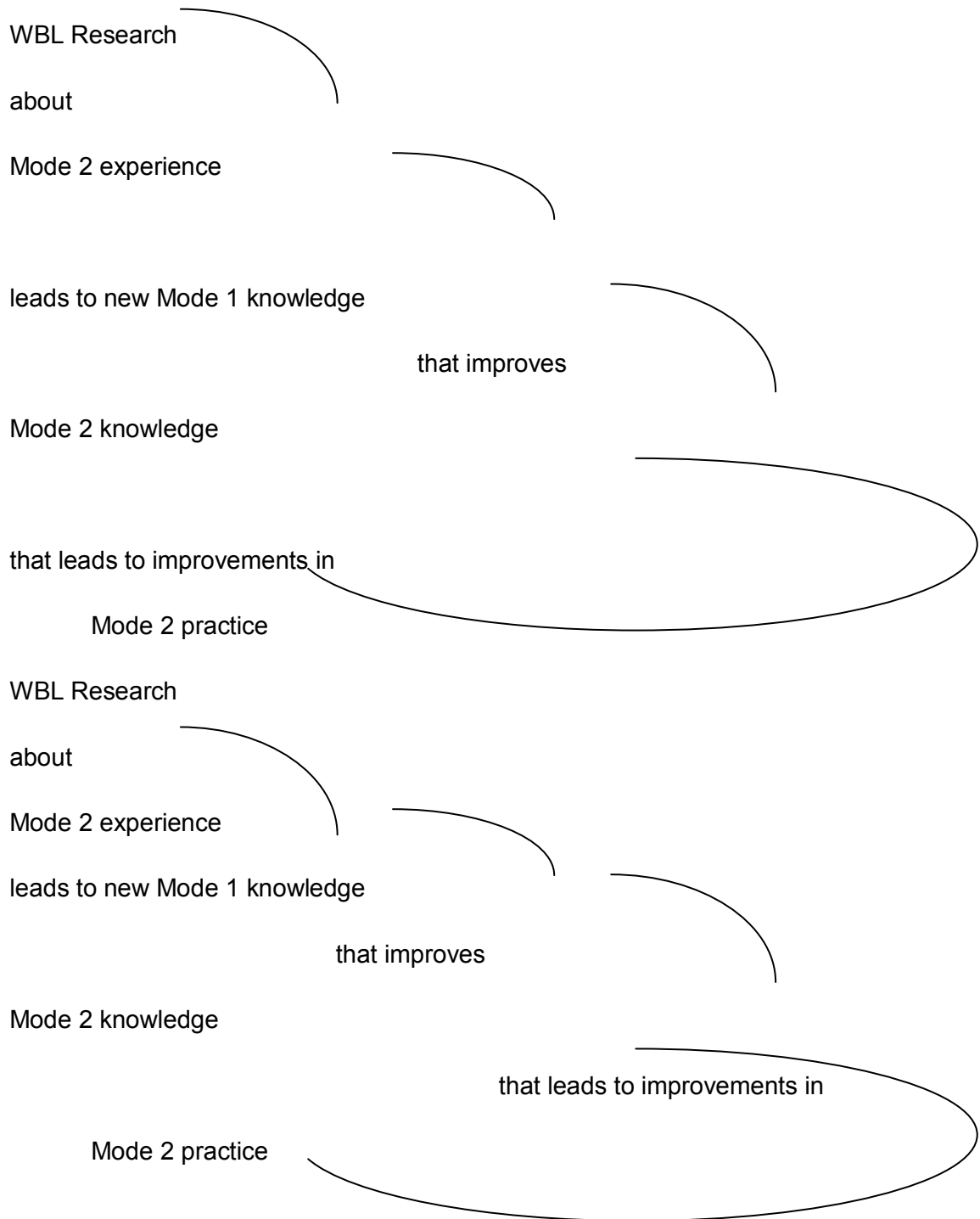
This could have led to a double interpretation, where the researcher interpreted the interpretation of those being researched, and when then set against existing theories, the double interpretation might be subjected to a third interpretation. An awareness of the potential for different views and interpretations was necessary, and might have been partially countered by gaining a greater understanding of the respondents' particular social constructions by observing and questioning them, but it was, nevertheless, an inevitable limitation.

### **3.5.2 Logical steps in ontological decisions**

The next step was to reflect on how the ontological position might relate to those involved in the research. Although an alignment was not a necessary condition for deciding the appropriate viewpoint, it provided a logical coherence. The possible experiences and backgrounds of those involved in WBL courses were considered. The majority of prospective candidates would have learned most of their professional skills within the workplace, mainly from others, within a social context. WBL could have helped make their implicit knowledge explicit through the use of reflective thinking. This was particularly relevant where claims for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) were made, although the candidates in Case Studies A and B were not given this opportunity. WBL candidates generally would have been drawing on their experiences within the workplace by building on existing knowledge, as in the educational constructivist approach. For such candidates, social constructivism would be a mirroring of their process of WBL, regardless of whether or not candidates would understand the terminology. If the WBL process (as a method of study) and the ontology of this research aligned with social constructivism, then, in theory, any candidate moving on into higher degree level research (within the field of study of WBL) might have used this research as a starting point that was meaningful because it was about WBL, and because it came from a world view that they had experienced. Those with Mode 2 experience could have read this research, linked to similar experiences that resulted in creation of new Mode 1 knowledge that informed and improved Mode 2 practice, in a cycle that illustrated the WBL process that the new higher degree candidate would be about to start. This iterative process had an elegant simplicity where each cycle spiralled into the next, with potential for continual improvements. See Figure 3.1 below.

This may have had some potential relevance to WBL candidates, or course facilitators. It tied the ontology: to the pedagogy of WBL; to the different modes of knowledge inherent in this research; and gave logical coherence to the entire research process about and through WBL.

**Figure 3.1: A Work Based Learning Research Cycle**



### **3.5.3 Deskwork and fieldwork**

It is vital to contextualise research that is conducted within a social setting. It is also essential to ensure that an understanding of the context is based on a critical interpretation of what others think, rather than on assumptions that the view taken is the only view. The approach to this was through a literature review, however, with WBL thinking being dispersed through a variety of journals and other publications, and in some cases under alternative terminology, this took on a broader remit. As Costley, Abukari and

Little (2009:35) indicated, when they cited Lave and Wenger (1994), a community of practice is where practitioners can start to build shared understandings. The resultant knowledge is then returned into the context.

As practitioners come together by being involved with one another in action, they may become a 'community of practice' wherein they learn to construct shared understandings amid confusing and conflicting conceptions and interpretations of work and context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Hence, a community of practice returns knowledge back into its context in that such groups learn to observe and experiment with their own collective tacit understandings and established processes-in-action.

This is reflected within the approach to exploring the context of WBL and employer engagement taken for the literature review for this research (p. 30). The WBL community of practice was accessed to develop an understanding of context; explaining the context broadened the understanding of those who participated, including the researcher; that understanding was then brought to this research; if this research might be read by the WBL community of practice it might add to their understanding (and hence could again be returned to the community of practice in a different form). This also reflected Schön's (1987) ideas of knowledge coming from practitioners reflecting on practice where the tacit knowledge was revealed through reflection in or after action.

A combination of deskwork and fieldwork was used for gathering data. Desk work was used for much of the literature review, including Government policy issues. As WBL was a relatively new field of study, fieldwork was also used to consult WBL experts directly, and to become familiar with current practice and literature through attending conferences. Literature related to WBL, other aspects of learning, and the organisation, have been reviewed in Chapter 2. The literature related to methodology including research methods and data analysis are discussed in this chapter.

Fieldwork included observations of classes to develop a better understanding of the learning experiences of the candidates, and to build a co-operative working relationship which might have improve the flow of information and response rates. Questionnaires for candidates in Case Studies A and B were prepared, distributed electronically, and analysed as desk work, prior to fieldwork interviews. Deskwork preparation of questions for semi-structured interviews for all case studies led to fieldwork of conducting semi-structured interviews. A search of official documentation (desk work) for university perspectives was completed before key people were interviewed (fieldwork).

#### **3.5.4 Ethics**

Ethical conduct is about safety, honesty and respect; dignity, rights and fairness; and it is about ensuring the highest standards of quality, care and concern for people, the environment and living things; it is about knowledge, truth and justice; about operating

morally within legal frameworks with altruism and integrity; about virtue and honour. Research must always be conducted in an ethical way. It is essential to follow ethical guidelines of the highest standards so that integrity is maintained. People who respond to requests for data are completing acts of trust; maintenance of this trust is essential for without it all future research is in jeopardy.

Denscombe (2002:174-5) cites Kimmel (1996:5) when defining ethics and morality before declaring the way in which they are combined at a practical level to give a moral perspective on what ought to be done, rather than what it may be possible to do, in research:

Ethics concerns the system of moral principles by which individuals can judge their actions as right or wrong, good or bad.

At a practical level, it deals with what *ought* to be done and what ought not to be done. ... The problem is no longer one of what it is possible or logical to do, crucial to the rest of the research methodology, but one of what ought to be done taking into consideration the rules of conduct that indicate what is right and proper to do. It calls for a moral perspective on things, rather than a practical perspective (Denscombe 2002:175).

HEIs ensure that researchers comply with regulations regarding ethics. Some higher degrees include a compulsory course on ethics; an additional course on implementing the highest standards of integrity is available to those who regard integrity as essential; the researcher studied both. Researchers need to be aware of their own perspectives, and to question why they see things in a particular way, to be fair and just. From a social constructivist viewpoint, there is no such thing as objectivity; there is only subjectivity. Others may have a different awareness, so researchers need to openly question and re-think values that do not match those previously considered. All views must be reported accurately and fairly even if they work against the conclusions of the research by challenging, or conflicting with the researcher's views. Researchers should make their own positions as transparent as possible for others to judge for themselves. Information that would compromise the research findings should still be reported. However, the researcher should not become a silent witness to something that may cause harm, and principles considered vital to a civilised society should not be broken. Information that contravenes either legalities or ethical principles should be dealt with in accordance with the University's research principles, as shown below.

#### Principle 5

The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants, and their anonymity, must be respected except in cases where illegal behaviour is discovered. All data and other materials from and about research participants will be collected, processed, retained, stored, and disposed of, in accordance with current legal requirements.

#### Principle 6

The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be disclosed. Publication of research results must be done fairly and with the public good taking priority over private or personal interests  
[http://www.\[C\].ac.uk/sections/research/ethics.cfm](http://www.[C].ac.uk/sections/research/ethics.cfm) [accessed 29th May, 2011].

The research was discussed fully with the main negotiators of Partnership organisations involved in the study before formal permission to be included in this research was granted in writing by the organisations. Permission was requested from, and granted by the University Ethics Committee before data collection commenced. WBL candidates and other research participants were informed of the purpose of the research from the outset. Each was given a letter of explanation, requesting their informed consent and explaining that they could opt out of the research at any time. As all respondents held responsible jobs the risk of anyone either not comprehending the purpose of the research, or not being able to give informed consent was negligible. Information of a personal nature was fairly low risk and was restricted to name, gender, age band, level of education and qualifications, job title and email address. The questionnaire asked for the respondents' perspectives, rather than factual information. Details of participants have been and will at all times be kept securely and separately from data provided by them to ensure that identities were and will remain confidential; electronic data has been and will continue to be password protected and all data has been, and will be kept in secure areas with restricted access, especially during analysis.

Anonymity was not possible because of known identities of respondents interviewed. However, each participant's personal information was confidential. Respondents were not identifiable by reference to their specific work role, or their gender, since one cohort was predominantly male, and another predominantly female, so mentioning gender and organisation could identify minority respondents. Implications for analysis of results by gender was a limitation in the research: with one group predominantly female, and the other group predominantly male, results might be balanced, or skewed considerably, but the groups selected were typical of the gender predominance within their sectors. A general description of role was used when quoting respondents, rather than specific roles, to protect identities. An indication of roles within each organisation is given in Appendix 4 to permit a fuller understanding of the composition of respondents. Some roles for candidates in case studies A and B have been ascribed as operational, where they tend to use more physical skills, or are front-line in dealing with clients, whereas others have been ascribed as support, where the roles tend to be more administrative, or back-room in nature. It is acknowledged that many roles do not fall completely, nor comfortably within one category, but the operations label indicates that these roles require considerable M2 knowledge that require a long 'on-the-job' learning cycle.

Following Principle 6 guidelines above, it must be acknowledge that this research was funded by HEFCE's Strategic Development Funding (SDF) monies through a PhD

scholarship. If the research were to have evaluated the consequences of something that was itself funding the evaluation, questions about ethical considerations could, and should have been raised. However, this research was not an evaluation study. It was about understanding and describing how WBL impacted the organisations, so that a benchmark of 'best practice' could be set for the future, for others to compare and contrast their findings about the impact of employer engagement through WBL. The researcher acknowledges being an advocate of WBL. This may be advantageous in trying to describe, understand and look for best practice; however, assumptions need to be questioned seriously. By being open and honest, and acknowledging a personal stance, the researcher has taken the onus of responsibility to present a full and fair case as discussed above. By being transparent about stance, informed by both practical and theoretical knowledge, and experience, others may decide for themselves the relevance from their informed point of view. As already stated, from a social constructivist perspective there is no such thing as objectivity.

### **3.5.5 Action Research**

WBL is concerned with Mode 2 knowledge: the practical application of knowledge that is acquired through experience. For consistency and harmony, research to generate new knowledge should have been implemented by having some practical application. If the initial purpose of the WBL (produced within the context of a partnership) was to make beneficial changes in the workplace, then if the research helped towards this end, it was in accord with the initial purpose. This automatically moved the research methodology into Action Research (AR). Dissonance between knowledge and its application might have indicated internal organisational tensions, as indicators of a need for change, (e.g. knowledge; application of knowledge; or some other unknown factor). Looking at such dissonance by using an AR approach to solve the problem would again have been likely to help with the initial intention of making beneficial changes in the workplace.

However, that assumption also raised the questions of "what is meant by beneficial?" and subsequently, "to whom?" This complicated issue meant that any change will have had implications for its system. In this research, because WBL started with HEI / employer engagement, the organisation had some purpose that the partnership fulfilled, to the mutual benefit of both the organisation and the University involved in the partnership. The employee/candidate was involved in the resultant course, and had elected to participate, therefore saw some benefit. If the organisation benefited, then it was likely to become more sustainable, and this may (or may not) have provided more sustainable employment for the course participants (the employees/candidates). If the organisation could no longer employ a candidate, at least the candidate would have increased skill levels and might also have gained a qualification: either, or both, might have helped in securing further employment. All three stakeholders had engaged in the partnership provision in good faith. The risk-averse University would not have entered an agreement that would be likely



to cause harm, so the initial research view must be in accord with that. The point of the research was to describe the impact. A better description of that impact would have been likely to be obtained through AR than from simply questioning participants.

Reason and Bradbury (2008:4) give their own working definition of AR:

Action research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

Action Research had its origins in the work of Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, whose work (1920s to 1940s) is often cited, although his contribution was contested because it challenged Freudian psychology. Bradbury *et al* in Reason and Bradbury (2008: 90) acknowledged the importance of Lewin's work for both action research and organisational development:

It has been quipped that the tradition of AR/OD is a collection of 'footnotes to Lewin' (Bradbury, 2006). Our chapter illustrate that indeed OD efforts draw strongly – if not always explicitly – on Lewin's original ideas. .... Lewin offered a path out of the post-Cartesian split that made doing a derivative of thinking. He reconceived knowing and doing in a cyclical relationship in which the quality of one was the quality of the other. Moreover, this was but one move in his generally more holistic approach to scholarly practice in support of participative change.

In his paper 'Action Research and Minority Problems' Lewin (1946) highlighted that action-research techniques were for research to help the practitioner:

Mr Baldan presents in a very clear way the challenge of the person who is trying to improve group relations. .... He is quite in doubt about the effectiveness of the techniques used for the betterment of intergroup relations, without being able to offer suggestions for techniques which have been proved to be effective. He asks, therefore, for action-research, for research which will help the practitioner.

Dewey (1922) also highlighted the importance of reflective thinking. Lewin incorporated Dewey's progressive educational theories and self-improvement methods concerned with group work. The educationalists' perspective continued with the work of Stenhouse and Elliott (Stenhouse, 1983) with their Human Curriculum Project of the 1970s with 'teacher as researcher' coupling research to action and change. Further contributions, by Susman and Evered (1978); Carr & Kemmis (1986); and Kemmis & McTaggart (1988), led to Action Research for change.

The work of Winter (1989) and Heron & Reason (1997) moved AR to a position related to increased professionalism through theory development that contributed significantly to professional debates. This gave Participant Action Research (PAR) a dual function that:

- simultaneously generated theory and enabled changes in practice;
- added to the body of knowledge while making social change in the real world.

PAR was:

- about developing people as well as being socially orientated, so its educational origins remained, although it considered individuals as members of groups;
- concerned with solving problems and initiating change through intervention;
- problem-focussed, context-specific and future-orientated because it arose from some knowledge of an issue and the need for change for the better;
- invariably education-centred, because the participants engaged with change had a level of knowledge that could generate the theory to bring about the change when implemented, and as such the role of the participants was different from other research approaches.

Action research in this thesis was appropriate in terms of:

- the impact revealed by the research
  - giving feedback with potential to modify the course to suit specific partnership/organisational learning requirements;
- objectives
  - promoting learning within the organisation, through effective partnerships;
- main aims of the research
  - providing rich descriptions of the perspectives within the partnership in order to establish new partnerships more effectively; and to add to the body of knowledge of WBL.

Given the reflexive nature of WBL and the cyclical pattern of feedback of AR, the approach may have developed an element of co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996) (also known as collaborative inquiry) with research done with rather than on people and participants potentially becoming co-researchers. This may have led into a form of developmental action inquiry (Torbert, 2004:1) that increased the effectiveness of actions and may have helped “individuals, teams, organisations become more capable of self-transformation and thus more creative, more aware, more just and more sustainable”. The dilemma would then have been how much of the impact could be attributed to the research rather than WBL, which was why analysis and critique of what was happening was more appropriate than an evaluation that tried to measure how much or to what extent something was happening.

The iterative nature of PAR provided opportunities for maximising the benefits of partnership by feeding back into the system the comments and suggestions of participants which might, as a catalyst, have speeded up change. PAR was in keeping with the social constructionist stance, since interactions between researcher and participants might have clarified the perceptions that each held, and the iterative nature helped in understanding educational changes that built through time. The feedback offered further reflexivity, since

it reflected on the reflective nature of WBL, and also encouraged the participants' skills in becoming reflective thinkers. The interactive nature of this research provided additional potential for the partnership to work well, with open communications, and opportunities for dialogue. The nature of the impact (for each group of stakeholders, from their perspective) was part of the findings of the research. This dictated the approach of in-depth semi-structured interviews (Wengraf, 2001) that fed back into the organisations.

The form of action research taken for this research was modified. It was not a constant re-iteration, nor was it participatory. It was based on an initial observation of classes and candidates: to understand the process of WBL and their experiences of it; and explored issues that arose from their interactions within the classes, and the informal spaces, such as coffee breaks and lunch breaks that surrounded the classes. The researcher's participation in the classes, was generally fairly neutral, as an observer, or if asked to participate in a more active way, as a facilitator who enabled others to take the lead, or as a prompter who drew out explanations or clearer meanings from candidates for others within the group. The mere presence of an observer inevitably made some change to group dynamics and actions, so there was no claim for complete neutrality. These observations shaped the questions put to candidates in a questionnaire, as the first completed loop of the spiral. The questionnaire was followed by a semi-structured interview (SSI) with the individual candidates, as the second completed loop. At the end of the SSI with each candidate, the main points were summarised to enable clarification or contradiction, if necessary, and gave an immediate feedback to the candidate of the contributions that they had made to the organisation from the answers that they had given. At this stage the contact with the candidate was completed, with the exception of a short email to thank the candidate for participating. It was an adaption that was in the spirit of AR, in that: the candidate had an opportunity to correct any major misinterpretation; and the feedback may have made a difference to the candidate's perception of their own achievements, which may then have further benefited the candidate and / or the organisation; however, it did not interfere with the research data.

### **3.5.6 Case studies**

Case studies of large organisations involved in successful WBL partnerships were used for this research. The use of case studies was the obvious approach, dictated by the aim and circumstances of the research. According to Yin (2009) "[T]he case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events." Additionally he said (p. 4):

The more your questions seek to explain some present circumstance (e.g. "how" or "why" some social phenomenon works), the more that the case study method will be relevant. The method also is relevant the more that your questions require an extensive and "in-depth" description of some social phenomenon.

By considering both public and private large organisations in the NE, comparisons could be made between the two sectors, with regard to the impact of HEI / employer engagement based on negotiated WBL provision, and the resultant initial benchmarks might be useful for future studies.

In selecting the Case Studies there were a number of criteria considered: the organisations should be important contributors to the local economy, be active partners with the University, should be considered to present 'best practice' and be known to be willing to act upon feedback. Other influencing factors were:

- The NE, and particularly the sub-region in which the University was located, was highly dependent on public sector jobs: 29%, compared to 24% nationally in 2004 (Lee, 2008).
- Public sector organisations were large organisations.
- The economic situation at the start of the research indicated that SMEs were experiencing difficulties which presented a moral dilemma about asking those under considerable pressure to divert their energies to research, and also presented a risk to both the SME and to the completion of the research if the SME did not survive the downturn.

The decision to select a large public sector organisation for one case study was balanced by considering a large private sector organisation as the second case study. Both large organisations were:

- actively involved in established, on-going partnerships with the University;
- considered to be actively seeking and willing to act on feedback, and so were likely to be considered as 'best practice' organisations;
- implementing programmes that involved 'master classes' where all participants were released from normal work commitments on a regular basis.

Classes were usually held at the University, although delivery of the courses was negotiated so that some were delivered by the University, and some by the organisation. As the University was a large organisation, and was also impacted by its provision of WBL, it appeared as an obvious third case study. This result was a balanced suite of three large organisations as case studies for the research.

The initial expectation (building on the Nixon & KSA study, 2008) was that the research questions would bring out the WBL participants' perception of impact and would also illuminate the ways that Mode 2 implicit knowledge came to the fore, and could be utilised by the participants, and others, for the benefit of the organisation. Qualitative data, essential for a rich, in-depth understanding was collected by using a case study approach. Purposive sampling was used where each case study made a significant contribution to the local economy and was a good example of a partnership organisation involved in

HEI/employer engagement that provided negotiated WBL courses for employees. Initial selection of public and private sector case studies were made by consulting those involved in WBL at a senior level within the participating University, who were asked to introduce the researcher to the main negotiator within each organisation. The negotiator was asked to give formal permission for the organisation to participate in the research after a brief outline of what was anticipated in terms of purpose and commitment.

### **3.5.7 Selection of respondents**

Having chosen the case studies using purposive sampling, the groups of respondents from each case study were selected. Again, purposive sampling was used so that those participating in the research were able to contribute meaningful data. Initial contacts were also asked to nominate respondents within their organisation, as snowball sampling, in an attempt to include relevant perspectives that may have been overlooked / unknown.

The people interviewed included:

- Executives from all organisations who were involved in negotiating partnership agreement: with a focus on:
  - relevance of vision statements, policy documents, philosophical aims, pragmatic needs; and
  - other reasons for the partnership;
  - what they hoped to get from the partnership, and why;
- employees/candidates or lecturers involved in the actual WBL process: with a focus on:
  - motivations:
    - why they were involved in studying;
    - what they expected to get from it; and
    - the consequences;
  - ways that WBL may make a difference:
    - to what they/others do/may do in future, and
    - to the organisation;
- administrators vital to the operation of WBL with a focus on:
  - the process making a difference, to them and to the organisation; and
  - their involvement in improving the organisation.

Each of the three case studies appeared to have three different cohort perspectives, with scope for triangulation both within and between case studies, however, there were some overlap of roles, where negotiators were also the key administrators for both A and B; and executives of B delivered modules. A mapping of respondents within their respective organisations is given in Appendix 4. At the time of data collection candidates were

studying negotiated WBL courses. An Action Learning Set (ALS) was formed of previous public sector candidates who had completed earlier versions of the same programme, within the same organisation, and this group was accessed as a means for triangulation of results, and comparison with current candidates.

### **3.5.8 Validity and reliability**

From a positivist perspective qualitative data would be the norm for research, and it would be important to show validity and reliability in order to give confidence in the findings. However, this research was taking a social constructivist perspective, and the research questions required qualitative data. This presented a dilemma in terms of showing that the research was robust because applying positivist criteria to social constructivist data was not necessarily acceptable to everyone. However, it could be argued that positivist criteria depended upon peer review, and criteria for knowledge that was socially constructed had a more robust peer review where it was shown to work in practice, rather than being a theoretical construction that had still to be proven in practice. A consideration of ways of ensuring validity and reliability for qualitative data follows.

Triangulation, according to Cohen and Manion (2000:254) was an "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint". According to O'Donoghue and Punch (2003: 78), triangulation was a "method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data". Wengraf (2001:54) cited Denzin (1970) when he said:

In sociology, the principle of 'triangulation' has been put forward which suggests that you should consider looking for at least three empirical indicators for any particular, moderately complex theoretical concept (Denzin 1970).

Bryman (2008: 379) explained that triangulation resulted in greater confidence in findings.

Triangulation can operate within and across research strategies. It was originally conceptualised by Webb *et al* (1966) as an approach to the development of measures, resulting in greater confidence in findings.

The important issue was that whatever criteria were used, there would be greater confidence in findings. A number of possible options are discussed below.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) put forward trustworthiness and authenticity as criteria for judging qualitative research as an alternative to reliability and validity which were considered the norm for quantitative research.

They divided trustworthiness into four sections:

1. credibility, which used the technique of triangulation;
2. transferability, or “thick description - that is, rich accounts of the details of a culture” (Geertz 1973:3-30), that enabled others to judge the transferability;
3. dependability where researchers adopted an auditing approach; and
4. confirmability where the researcher had not intentionally swayed the conduct of the research.

Authenticity had the criteria of:

1. fairness, of viewpoints of the respondents;
2. ontological authenticity, where they better understood their social setting;
3. educative authenticity, where they had a better appreciation of the perspectives of others; and
4. catalytic authenticity, where action to change circumstances was generated by the research.

Although these criteria could apply well to this research, an action research approach may be considered to mitigate against the criteria for confirmability by some, however, the authenticity criteria are almost a full reflection of WBL itself. It should be noted that Bryman (2008:378) added:

Lincoln and Guba argue that a thick description provides others with what they refer to as a database for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other *milieu*.

Yardley (2000) promoted her criteria of:

1. sensitivity to context, of social setting, theoretical and ethical issues;
2. commitment and rigour, through skilled engagement; transparency and coherence, concerning research methods, arguments and reflexivity; and
3. impact and importance related to theory, community and practice.

Again, most of these criteria fitted extremely well with this research, but to contemplate the impact of impact itself, may have been considered as a circular argument.

Hammersley's (1992:32) 'subtle realism' was often used as an acceptable way of judging qualitative research, however, it was dependent upon acceptance that there was an external social reality that could be accessed by the researcher, and that conflicted with the stance of social constructivist taken throughout this research. The important issue for the researcher was that the research was carried out in an open and honest way so that it could be judged upon its merits. With social constructivism there were different views of the world, each being socially constructed. The researcher could only present the view constructed, with the help of the respondents and others who had interacted to build skills,

knowledge and understanding. If everyone deferred to a particular list then there would be limited scope for new contributions to knowledge, so it was right that there should be options. However, whether the researcher's interpretation of open and honest conformed to Guba and Lincoln's trustworthiness, or to Yardley's transparency depended on the interpretation of anyone who wished to judge; but if there were major agreement to each set of criteria, and any disagreement did not significantly overlap to point out a glaring chasm in all views, then it was likely to be acceptable to the community of practice to whom it was of interest.

### **3.6 Methods of Collecting Data**

Data collection methods included observations, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Although theory questions were the basis of the research, they were put to participants in a different format, in the idiolect of the interviewee, as recommended by Wengraf (2001:64). Observation sessions were a means of encountering the idiolects before designing the questionnaire which preceded the interviews. Open-ended questions such as: "what is your most important learning from the course" led on to more open-ended questions such as "how has this learning helped you at work?" Although a matrix of probable answers was devised before the piloted questions were asked, respondents had the opportunity to answer according to their perceptions, rather than answers being confined to a narrow, predetermined view. The free text responses led on to additional questions intended to elicit further data related to the main focus of the research, but within the framework that the respondent presented. The interviews were recorded (with permission) and handwritten notes were also taken. The recordings were transcribed, and annotated. Permission was granted to use the data before it was collected, as outlined in the Ethics section above.

#### **3.6.1 Observations**

Fieldwork observations of WBL classes were used as a way of understanding the experiences of the candidates in terms of curriculum content, pedagogical approaches, and group interactions. The researcher introduced herself to the candidates before the class, and briefly outlined the aims of the research. The objectives of the observation sessions were to understand the issues of importance to the candidates, and also to build relationships with the candidates, as socially constructed realities could only be constructed through social interactions. The focus of observations included noting the levels of language used; the formality or informality of interactions, the types of conversations; the apparent concentration levels, and content that could be used as examples in questionnaires or semi-structured interviews. By listening carefully, and watching the classes in formal and informal situations, the questionnaire should have been targeted appropriately, which would have made it of more relevance to the participants, and to the research, and by being with the group, there was a higher probability of questionnaire completion and interview participation.



### **3.6.2 Questionnaire**

The Questionnaire was developed as an electronically distributed survey for all current candidates, and previous candidates who were participating in the Action Learning Set. The questionnaire was an efficient way of collecting data about: the candidates' profiles, in terms of age range, previous education, motivation for taking the course; and the impacts of the course on themselves, their work, and the organisation. One of the main purposes of the questionnaire was to show whether or not the course achieved some of the intended outcomes.

The first six questions aimed to find if there was an improvement in feelings of well-being at a personal level within the work context as a result of WBL studies: as a result of your studies are you: more self confident; more satisfied by your work; happier in your work; and, feeling more valued within your organisation? The second question was concerned with becoming more effective in terms of communications: contributing to team work; communicating with colleagues; communicating with clients; and providing good customer service. The third question was about changes in the job in terms of being easier; performed differently; more effective; and giving or getting better value for money. The fourth question asked about usefulness of the course in terms of relevance to the job; learning about tools, processes or systems; seeing the overview of the organisation; and learning general skills that were transferable within the organisation. Question five asked if the course had helped in terms of developing a better understanding of: the benefits of university education; the organisation's values; dealing with challenges within the job; and organisational culture (the way the organisation did things). Question six was concerned with how often learning from the course would be used, and looked at reflective thinking; customer relationships; managing projects; getting further help; and the way that things were done within the organisation.

The questionnaire included some Likert scale responses, some ranked responses and some open-ended questions that allowed respondents to comment. The questionnaire permitted an initial gathering of information before a follow-up semi-structured interview. Consent/Agreement forms (see Appendix 1) were completed before data gathering commenced. The questionnaire (see Appendix 2) is outlined in detail in Chapter 4, with each step being explained before it is analysed.

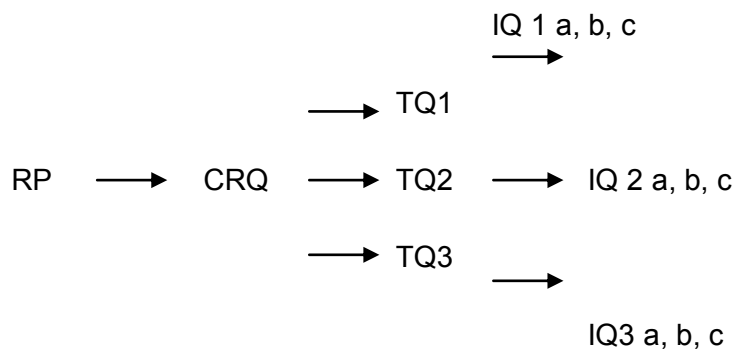
### **3.6.3 Semi-structured interviews**

The semi-structured interviews had two distinct groups: the candidates, and others, who could be categorised as: executives involved in setting up partnership negotiations; facilitators involved in delivering courses; and those involved in peripheral (which may have meant administrative, but did not mean unimportant) tasks. In all cases the intention was to find how the interviewees regarded their contribution to the organisation, and the subsequent ways that the WBL course impacted the organisation, including things that

facilitated or blocked progress. Consent forms were sent out in advance, and were completed before interviews for everyone except candidates, who had completed the form earlier. Permission was requested to record responses electronically, with hand written notes taken as back-up.

The semi-structured interviews (SSIs) were designed using guidance provided by Wengraf (2001:73), where the research purpose (RP) determined the central research question (CRQ), which was informed by theory questions (TQs), which were answered by interview questions (IQs).

**Figure 3.2 SSI design adapted from Wengraf (2001:73)**



For this research, the central research question (CRQ) as indicated earlier, was

- How does the Mode 2 learning of the individual impact the Mode 2 learning of the organisation?

For the candidates' SSI, this broke down into a series of theory questions (TQs):

- How does the Mode 2 learning impact
  - the individual? (TQ1)
  - the individual's job? (TQ2)
  - the organisation? (TQ3)

Each theory question then had a number of interview questions (IQs):

- The individual:
  - What motivates you at work? (IQ1a)
    - motivation and values
  - What have you enjoyed about the course? (IQ1b)
    - affective
  - What is your most important learning from the course? (IQ1c)
    - knowledge / skills

- The job:
  - How has your most important learning helped your work? (IQ2a)
    - M2 implementation
  - What other things have been useful in the course? (IQ2b)
    - M2 implementation of knowledge or skills
  - Have they made a difference to the way you work? (IQ2c)
    - M2 procedure/process/motivation/affective
- The organisation:
  - What changes have been made for others from your most important learning helping the way you work? (IQ3a)
    - M2 changes within the organisation
  - What changes have been made to the organisation from other useful things that have made a difference to the way you work? (IQ3b)
    - M2 changes within the organisation.
  - Other differences? (IQ3c)
    - M2 changes within the organisation.

The SSI questions formed a framework to provide answers to the CRQ, but sometimes allowing the interviewee to talk freely provided answers without having to ask the questions. Similarly, when information was given, a response could be followed up to expand the answer, and this could lead to another expression of the CRQ outlined above:

- What is the impact?
- How does it impact?
- Why does it impact?
- With what consequences does it impact?

The iterative research approach using observation, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with a modified action research approach fed back into itself in a reflexive manner, by clarifying the perspectives of participants from observations, through to questionnaires into semi-structured interviews; and also fed back into the partnership to permit fine-tuning of the next iteration of the programme of study. The SSI questions are provided in Appendices 5 and 6.

### 3.7 Analysis of data

The data was analysed using Grounded Theory which was in keeping with social constructivism rather than a Positivist ontology, and used an inductive, interpretative approach. Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) built theory from practice through analysis of data that allowed the real issues to emerge from the data with minimal bias. According to the Grounded Theory Institute [www.groundedtheory.com](http://www.groundedtheory.com) [accessed 31st March, 2011] whose founder was Barney G. Glaser:

All research is "grounded" in data, but few studies produce a "grounded theory." Grounded Theory is an inductive methodology. Although many call Grounded Theory a qualitative method, it is not. It is a general method. It is the systematic generation of theory from systematic research. It is a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories. These concepts/categories are related to each other as a theoretical explanation of the action(s) that continually resolves the main concern of the participants in a substantive area. Grounded Theory can be used with either qualitative or quantitative data.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) initially worked together to defend qualitative research at a time when the dominant view was that quantitative studies were the valid, systematic form of research. Their methods, that 'challenged the hegemony of the quantitative research paradigm' (Charmaz, 2003) provided guidelines for building theory to explain the data, with a cycle that refined analysis and interpretation of data that then focussed further data collection and informed the development of theoretical analysis. Glaser and Strauss disagreed about the development of their theory. Glaser's view, which often came close to traditional positivism, was promoted as the classic view by Glaser. It assumed an objective, external reality with a neutral observer. However, Strauss worked with Corbin to take this further, into post-positivism, by considering respondents' views of reality, and how they conflicted with their own. A third main contributor was Charmaz, who took the constructivist grounded theory position as the middle ground between positivism and postmodernism. She said (2003:250):

Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). The power of grounded theory lies in its tools for understanding empirical worlds. We can reclaim these tools from their positivist underpinnings to form a revised, more open-ended practice of grounded theory that stresses its emergent, constructivist elements. We can use grounded theory methods as flexible, heuristic strategies rather than as formulaic procedures.

### 3.7.1 Fractal Concept Analysis

Major criticisms of grounded theory were that although the data were constantly compared to enable the codes to emerge from them, the system for building these codes into concepts or themes was largely dependent upon the researcher's insights or intuition. Wasserman, Clair and Wilson (2009:335) explained this:

[T]here is no systematic or transparent way for gaining insight into the conceptual relationships between discovered codes. Producing a grounded theory depends not only on the definition of conceptual pieces, but the delineation of a relationship between at least two of those pieces. Second, the conceptualisation process of grounded theory is done in hierarchical fashion, where individual codes emerge from the data but then are used to generate insight into more general concepts and thematic statements. but various works on grounded theory have failed to provide any systematic way of using data specific levels of scale (the codes) to gain insight into more macro levels of scale (concepts and themes).

These authors offered a solution in terms of fractal concept analysis. They first explained building grounded theory (p.359), starting with the process of 'constant comparison' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) where data-driven themes emerged by comparing everything to everything else in a discursive way that generated insights, rather than as a straightforward grouping. They noted that the discrepancies between new data and previous concepts were dealt with by synthesising the conceptual scheme to accommodate, rather than forcing a fit, or dismissing data, and that the concepts and themes were improved through this synthesising process. They explained the use of narrative memos to develop the themes that emerged while linking new concepts, and the way that this process helped to sort the important codes into categories within the memos. In a similar process the categories were developed and theories emerge. New data from theoretical sampling was constantly compared and a theoretical framework was developed, with new gaps, and additional concepts. Wasserman, Clair and Wilson (2009:363-366) drew on the work of Charmaz (2001) in explaining how theory was constructed after considering the literature.

Memos are written in narrative form and allow the researchers to expound on emergent themes while building linkages between concepts. Through this process one is able to elevate significant codes into categories. By continually comparing data with categories in memos, categories begin to fill out and can be further elaborated, advancing theory development throughout the whole process. Through theoretical sampling, new data are sought, and with the procedure of constant comparison, one eventually moves toward developing a theoretical framework. While writing up a manuscript draft, new gaps are identified and concepts further refined. As the grounded theorist finally turns to the existing literature, the whole piece is reworked, which culminates in theory construction (Charmaz, 2001).

Having explained the process, they questioned how theory leapt out of the data, and how it promoted insights into conceptual structures. They noted that Glaser (1978:72) admitted 'theoretical codes are always implicit'.

According to Wasserman, Clair and Wilson (2009:363-366) fractal patterns (Mandelbrot, 1982) were first discovered in cotton prices, “which were thought to be chaotic”, but “actually repeat a similar pattern across multiple levels of scale” (p.363). They illustrated that “fractals hold the promise for systemised observation without sacrificing complexity p. 364) and stated that “Fractals have the capacity to incorporate multiple styles of logic organised into generators” (p.365).

Referring to Mathematics, they explained that fractals could be written as an equation (called a generator). When the output of an initial run was used as the input for the next, this was called iteration, and the forward moving process became more complex: in the case of a branching V pattern, it would first be replicated twice, then four times. By repeating this process of iteration in a feedback loop, fractal pictures were formed when the data was plotted. The reverse process, called catiteration, moved back towards the initial V. “Catiteration for fractal concept analysis is a process of abstraction, but also one of uncovering self-similar structures” (p.373).

By using a Multilevel Integrated Cognition (MIC) generator (Wilson and Lowndes, 2004) which nests Static, Dynamic, Evaluative and Identity/Self categories, concepts can be linked into theoretical structures. The Static category refers to elements or simple objects, while the Dynamic category refers to actions or processes. The Evaluative category refers to judgements, values or feelings and the Identity/Self category refers to concepts of agency, uniqueness and creativity (Wasserman, Clair and Wilson, 2009:367-381).

They conclude by saying:

Fractal concept analysis provides a way for the researcher to systematically abstract from the data and perceive structural relationships between concepts. Since building theory is by definition dependent upon these abstractions and specifying conceptual relations, and the purpose of the grounded theory technique is to build theory, fractal concept analysis clearly is of benefit (p.378).

When using grounded theory it was immediately apparent how the MIC generator and fractal concept analysis could be used to organise data, to take the analysis to a further level. This technique simplified the process by allowing a clear assignation of concepts. By focusing on the assigned category, the iteration and catiteration of the concept became obvious and this clarity helped to create relevant theory.

The intention was to use Fractal concept analysis as outlined above with an appropriate MIC generator, which may be the one outlined above if it appeared to be viable from the concepts that emerged from the data.

### **3.7.2 Findings and Conclusions**

The analysis of the data led to an understanding of the benefits for the organisations involved in the partnerships. It compared and contrasted the public and private sector organisations. This in turn led to development of a model for those negotiating new partnerships, in the hope of reducing some of the costly lead times for busy high-level executives from both partnership organisations: it is usually easier to look at an existing model to see which parts may be relevant, than to start with a blank sheet, although it is also important to encourage creativity and to avoid being prescriptive. The impacts of WBL programmes on the three case studies were identified, models developed, and theory drawn from the data. Recommendations and conclusions were made, and included suggestions for the most appropriate way of sharing the new knowledge derived from the research with the WBL communities of practice, both nationally and internationally, in addition to possible future WBL research opportunities to follow on from this research.

## **3.8 Chapter Summary**

The chapter outlined the methodology for this research which was based on the collection of appropriate qualitative data to answer the central research question about the impact of the HEI/employer engagement negotiated WBL courses on the organisation. A case study approach (Yin, 2009) gathered perspectives of individuals who were involved in WBL courses that had been negotiated through employer engagement partnerships in three large organisations. An adapted Action Research approach (Bradbury and Reason, 2008) was taken with the case studies to try to understand the complexities of their social interactions, in keeping with a social constructivist view. Candidate perspectives were gathered through observations of classes to inform the construction of a questionnaire for candidates, which led to semi-structured interviews (Wengraf, 2001). The questionnaire profiled candidates in terms of their opinions and motivations as well as giving background information about them. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain data about the impact of WBL on the organisation from partnership negotiators, those involved in course delivery, and administrators. The qualitative data were analysed using a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) with fractal concept analysis (Wasserman, Clair and Wilson, 2009). Important issues such as ethics and integrity, the researcher's stance, research rigour in terms of non-positivist criteria, and the rationale for selecting respondents were discussed. Findings and conclusions included models to reduce costly lead time for senior executives negotiating WBL courses through partnerships, as well as showing benefits derived from the WBL for each organisation. It is hoped that any new theory emerging from the data, will add to the knowledge base of WBL as a field of studies. More details about the collection and analysis of data are provided in the next chapter.

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## **4 Chapter Four: Data Collection and Analysis: A and B.**

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### **4.1 Signposts**

Chapter Four is about the data collected from the two case studies, organisations A and B. The three case studies are outlined at the beginning of this chapter, before data is analysed for organisations A and B which work in partnership with the University, case study C. Perspectives of people working at the University will be considered in Chapter Five to allow comparisons with and responses to the needs of the partner organisations that unfold from this chapter. Chapter Four continues with an analysis of the executives' interview data that reveals their perspectives of underlying aims and objectives of the WBL programmes and their views of setting up the partnerships. The executives' perspectives are summarised in section 4.7.

An analysis of data from candidates' questionnaires provides a profile of candidates, and their opinions about the WBL programme's relevance to their work. This section is summarised in 4.12.

An analysis of the candidates' semi-structured interviews gives their rich, in-depth picture of the impact of the WBL programme. A comparison of the current and previous public sector candidates' views of impacts is given in section 4.16, with their combined views summarised in section 4.17. Figure 4.29 shows the details of impacts of the WBL programme on the public organisation.

The impacts of WBL on the private sector are presented in section 4.19 with the additional impacts detailed in Figure 4.31. The combined WBL impacts on both public and private sector organisations are summarised in section 4.20.

The chapter ends with a short summary of the chapter, after considering how the perceptions of employees/candidates of the programmes relate to the executives' initial expectations, by comparing the executive aims with the participants' perspectives of the impact.



## 4.2 The case studies

### 4.2.1 Public organisation case study A:

According to the OECD Policy Brief Economic Survey of the United Kingdom, 2007 summary:

The budget deficit remains large, and slower growth in government expenditure will be required over the coming years, as well as more effort to ensure good value for money in public spending

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/49/34/39384976.pdf> [accessed 26th August 2010].

This 'value for money' mantra was adopted as all-pervading for public organisations even before times of unprecedented cuts in funding, and sets the economic context for the public sector research.

An employer engagement partnership with a local authority had been negotiated during the first year of research, but restructuring and associated time and cost demands were decreasing their potential student numbers, and even the likelihood of courses running, which put the research at risk. In April 2010 case study permission was granted by another large public organisation, A, with both previous and existing cohorts for WBL programmes arranged through the partnership. The candidates, mainly female, were part of Cohort 5. The 'master-classes' were run for one day a month on the University campus. Previous cohorts studied in work locations but concerns about interruptions prompted executives to approve the University environment. The programme, award was a UCCPD, but negotiations for a future Foundation Degree, validated by University C, supported by systems such as the Library and Information Service, IT support, and access to Blackboard (the University's on-line distance education system) were taking place. The programme was delivered by A's education specialists, leaders within the organisation, or by consultants.

### 4.2.2 Private Organisation Case Study B

The private sector organisation was a long-established logistics business, which also had a conservancy role. In 2003, after years without investment, a new board of Directors prioritised training development and opportunities for promotion based on experience and aptitude, rather than on length of service. In 2005/6 the organisation and the University worked together for national accreditation of in-house safety training courses. As the North East's recruitment pool of people with specialist handling skills was limited, the organisation needed to grow its own workers by developing critical skills: a Foundation Degree in Leadership and Management was planned.

The recession was decreasing business before the Foundation Degree started. A large client closed in April 2009. The following month, B announcing 52 redundancies, mainly of people near retirement, that "left holes within the organisation" (B3). The Foundation Degree was in doubt, with an anticipation of no applicants, but over 60 applied. Directors

bravely decided to go ahead with the programme when closures and potential redundancies were producing huge concern about future employment (Naish 2010). Fifteen employees were chosen from a wide range of areas in the hope of improved communications healing antagonism between two divisions lacking understanding of their different, but essential roles.

#### **4.2.3 Higher Education Institute Case Study C**

University C working in partnership with case studies A and B was the third case study. This provided an opportunity for investigating WBL provision from the HEI perspective while also documenting the implementation of SDF funding to facilitate employer engagement using account managers and a customer relationship management system (CRMS) across all schools. Case studies A and B represented a small but significant part of the University's WBL component of employer engagement. The Business School coordinated Work Based Studies across all schools, provided school-based workforce development / SDF activity and was home to partnerships (including case studies for this research). However, employer engagement and WBL generally was offered across all schools although the two research partnerships both happened to be within the Business School. The transdisciplinary delivery of WBL and partnership provision must be contextualised within the culture and infrastructure of the University as an entity, and extended beyond those involved in the actual learning process.

HEFCE's SDF of £5.13 million provided the opportunity for case study C to make a significant difference to the NE with its "low skills equilibrium which creates a cycle of low skills and low productivity in the region" (Parry, 2009:49). Significant change was needed to attain the aspirations of Ambition 2020 (UKCES, 2009). For every six workers with higher level qualifications in the UK, the NE had only 5 (83%). SDF was intended to help 3000 employees in the region take advantage of new Higher Education opportunities. The University had been involved in WBL since 2000 and had a genuine commitment to improving the economic and social fabric of the sub-region to which it belonged. Partnerships were viewed as long-term, synergy-building relationships, rather than short-term customer/provider relationships. "Over the coming years, increasing amounts of the University's provision will be aimed at responding to employer needs and at strengthening the links between HE and the workplace." (Banim, 2009:3).

### **4.3 Obtaining Executives' Perspectives**

#### **4.3.1 Executive perspectives of the partnership and WBL impact**

Executives from the case studies were interviewed to investigate their initial expectations when setting up a partnership. A clear concept of executives' expectations may save

much time, effort and cost in setting up new partnerships. The particular focus is on the WBL programmes that were negotiated through these partnerships.

#### **4.3.2 Dual interviews**

Some executive semi-structured interviews were conducted with two people at the same time, at their request. Dual interviews simultaneously updated colleagues while providing research data. This useful strategy enabled colleagues to clarify their thinking, both individually, and as a team, while focusing on specific aspects of the partnership. Dual interviewees seemed both confident and comfortable in expressing their ideas without any obvious power-play or deferential behaviour. This dual interview format saved updating time for the organisation, second interview time for the researcher, and helped to confirm and clarify information for everyone. Although a serendipitous occurrence in this research, it proved to be beneficial for all concerned, and is a useful strategy that the researcher would consider building into future research where there is advantage to respondents in being able to explore and interchange ideas with colleagues working at a similar level. Open communications are essential for successful dual interviews, so if the suggestion is not initiated by the respondents, or one person dominates, there may be need to follow up some points individually.

#### **4.3.3 Data gathering**

Although a semi-structured interview format was drawn up to ensure that main areas could be covered, the interviews tended to evolve according to responses given. The executive / delivery interviews were in five sections:

Part one was about the partnership; part two concerned course provision; the third part investigated how the course impacted the organisation; part four asked interviewees to outline their rationale for this, and to note any consequences they had observed; and the final part provided opportunities for discussing any other matters.

#### **4.3.4 Analytical approach**

Interview notes, electronic recordings and transcriptions were used to systematically analyse interviews. Data from the non-university organisations were categorised under headings that came from the data, as with a grounded theory approach. Original data was rechecked to ensure that conflicting or additional material had not been overlooked for categorisations. The focus on facilitating new partnerships and their purpose, made it essential to note all executives' comments about their partnership arrangements. The concepts of Knowledge, People, Money, Time and Reputation were forming part of the analytical structure about motivation of candidates so were potential categories if the concepts emerged from candidates' responses. Candidates would be learning from the programme and may be using this learning in jobs within the organisation, which focussed the framework for the candidates' interviews on the MIC generator of the individual, the candidate's job, and the organisation.

#### **4.3.5 Partnership antecedents**

There were antecedents to the partnerships which may or may not be pre-requisites for forming a new partnership, but may help to establish it.

1. There appeared to be a mutual respect for the 'image' or reputation of the 'other' organisation: executives of both non-university organisations cited an award that the University had won, without any prompt; University executives considered the other large organisations as important contributors to the region.
2. Executives already knew each other by first names, from other networking experiences.
3. Executives of all three large organisations had worked together on civic schemes which provided potential opportunities for publicity, for feedback to stakeholders, and for further developing the relationship: these were peripheral to the WBL partnerships, and preceded them.

These opportunities presented the time, space and regional focus for the organisations to work together as an informal community of practice located within a geographical area whose mutual regional interests were of importance to each organisation. This involvement included working with schools within the region.

#### **4.3.6 Partnership levels within the organisations**

Partnerships operate at a number of levels. Executives of large organisations have: the strategic overview; the responsibility for authorising provision for the organisation's needs; and must ensure that the provision actually meets those needs. The executives must answer to their stakeholders. At the practical, operational level, a negotiator is the main communicator between (and within) the organisation and the university and ensures that appropriate provision occurs at the right time and place for the right people. The executive vision is translated into objectives, and the objectives into practical, achievable terms to be delivered as course modules in co-operation with others involved in accreditation, administration and delivery. The negotiator recruits for the course; ensures that the organisation can function when these key people are involved in learning; and ensures effective co-ordination and management of resources.

Joint interviews with executives A1 and A2 revealed an initial approach to the University, C, from the public sector organisation, A, as a possible solution to professional development needs with external input to meet strategic level requirements. A1 was responsible at a strategic level for decisions about the provider, and for ensuring that the organisation's requirements were delivered. A2 dealt with practical day to day operations.

Joint interviews were held with B1 and B2, two directors from private organisation B. The directors outlined the people and business strategies to meet the overall plans of the organisation, for approval by shareholders. B2 acknowledged B3 as the main negotiator with more time for the partnership than directors.

Clearly we review on an annual basis what our people plans are; how they fit in and how they mesh with the business plans for the company we run; and we try to tailor our relationships and our ability to deliver what we want, or have delivered what we want, on that basis.

## 4.4 Initial partnership arrangements

### 4.4.1 Existing networks / people

As noted above, various conditions predicate partnership arrangements and although it is not clear if these are pre-requisites, the importance of both networking and mutual-respect are evident. Networking relationships between the organisations and University at senior executive level existed prior to the partnership. The CEO of the public organisation was on the Board of the University. The executives of the private organisation met executives from the University at various social functions. The managing director was invited to participate in award activities connected with student excellence programmes before a director was invited to give a presentation.

The exposure just grew ... and we genuinely feel that if there is a pro-active and industry-focused tertiary education centre sitting on our doorstep, it's foolish for us not to be taking advantage of that.

B2 noted that the relationship grew in a time of change:

We were recognising that we were changing. And I think that the University recognised that it had to change ... to what industry wanted ... change is facing the employment sector ... and was something they had to respond to.

Directors appreciate high-level University executives listening and being proactive in helping them to solve problems. Talking of other universities in the past, one director of B noted their lack of interest and understanding about industry:

I've had running battles with people in universities, particularly in the NE who are just so totally detached from what industry really wanted, and what industry was really looking for.

The same director also enthused about the positive attitude of University C:

*[S]ince [first name of the Vice-Chancellor of C] has got involved, taken on the mission at [C] the whole place has totally revolutionised its attitude to what industry wants and what people working in industry want, and I think the level of co-operation between the team up there and the team up here is astonishing, ... and it's enormously positive from my point of view.*

The use of “the team up there and the team up here” denoted an executive union and mutual respect of equals which was reinforced when B1 summed up the changed role of the University as one of listening to industry, while acknowledging that peer recognition and public reputation were both important:

They have transformed that University for sure, and ... one of the big successes is that they have really engaged with industry and what industry wants, and have tailor-made courses around that as well. And it's not just ourselves; there are others... And it's astonishing what's happened to the campus area. There are huge ... investments in the place, which is great; and the awards. I think they very justifiably won the University ... Award, which is a massive accolade. ...

So you now see a lot more active involvement of the University, but only in a listening mode to what industry is doing. ... So they are actually out in the market place now more than they've ever been, to understand what industries need.

#### **4.4.2 Partnerships take time to grow**

It was clear from both dual interviews that partnerships set up for specific WBL programmes have the potential to grow far beyond the original remit. The relationships are considered as long-term and are built on mutual-respect, understanding and trust. Executives will try out a new partnership to see if it is successful before making additional commitments. B2 explained that development of the partnership was a gradual progression: “It's a developed thing: it's a whole process. You do a little thing; you see if it works; you do a bit more.”

B1 added that the partnership was continuing and growing.

[I]t's evolved quite randomly, and I think the Foundation Degree that we're doing is just about the pinnacle of it, and is a pretty major step forward: a major commitment; and is probably the result of about two or three years of just plodding a bit and seeing where the relationship is going. And it's all very positive.

The organisations each started out with a single WBL commitment with the University, but both now had a number of different projects running. B1 spoke of three initiatives that will add value to individuals and to the business.

We've now got ... three initiatives with these guys, which will add value, not just to the individuals, but also to the business as we go forward as well - and that's all about developing skills, knowledge ... and challenging management to continuously improve their own skill base and knowledge base.

Examples included accessing University expertise about IT systems.

Organisation A's other relationships with C had grown to include working on an accredited health and safety programme; a strategic imperative programme; and using C's venues for coaching, through another provider.

University accredited qualifications were preferred for WBL partnership programmes by organisation B because they value peer recognition and public reputation. Health and

safety training from a university, rather than a private organisation, are considered to reduce risks, both to reputation and of large settlement claims, in the unfortunate event of an accident. Employers appreciate sector-specific titles for their bespoke courses, but cost is also a consideration:

We are trying to make it very bespoke now for Public Sector, but that obviously depends on how much it is going to cost; obviously our funding as well ... with the budget cuts [A2]. A1 commented on the status of the University, and the recognition of the value of accreditation: "And you know, [C], University ... [Award], it's a distinguished recognition. People generally ... feel that if something is accredited it's of a certain worth".

## 4.5 Executives' requirements of the partnership for WBL

From an analysis of the data, the executives indicated that there were a number of important issues. These included value for their stakeholders; valuing people; networking to gain an awareness of what was happening within other departments within the organisation to break down silos; and fulfilling strategic objectives through enhancing the culture of the organisation. Each issue is summarised below.

### 4.5.1 Value

The organisations were continuing their commitment to education in an uncertain economy in their long-term best interests (Naish, 2009), but their investment needed to be translated back into the organisation by making a difference. Executives expect a return on investment (ROI) to satisfy accountability to their stakeholders, most notably in terms of finance, or enhanced reputation. People could add value by doing a little bit more that would enhance reputation.

According to B1:

We've taken that great step forward, to recognise that education has a significant advantage for us. Never-the-less we've got to make sure that it's translated back into the business as well, which I'm sure we will do.

B1 described value in terms of impact on finances, or as a positive step forward for the organisation, possibly in terms of a culture shift:

[V]alue for us is deliverability of a project, or a piece of work that has an impact either on the bottom line, or as a positive step forward for the business: *i.e.* organisational change, or whatever the case may be. It's part of an overall shift possibly in terms of culture, *i.e.* more forward thinking – learning – and acceptance of change culture; as opposed to 'we've always done it this way'.

A1 addressed the issue of people adding value by doing a little bit more to enhance the reputation of the organisation:

And people shouldn't get too hung up about what that means. It doesn't mean doing twice the work; it doesn't mean saving stacks of cash. It can sometimes

mean going that extra mile for a customer... so it's reputational for [A], so it's adding value to the organisation. And we've all got aspects in our jobs that we can do that in such small ways, but they have such big impacts.

#### **4.5.2 Valuing people**

'Valuing our people' is vital to organisation A. By the organisation investing in people and their accreditation, the individual feels valued, invested in, respected. That brings a consistency in learning from others and in the culture of the organisation: doing things 'our way', so enacting policies by treating staff with respect.

The organisations each saw involvement in the partnership and WBL programmes as a way of valuing its people. It was recognised that no matter how good a strategic vision may be, the vision could only be implemented through the commitment of its people.

A1 paraphrased the organisation's vision statement that was dependent upon the competency of managers and staff.

[W]e can't deliver that vision unless we've got competent managers and staff. So the managers need to be competent in what they are doing, and to be able to bring their staff on board. The vision is unattainable without the competency of all our people.

With a large workforce requiring many different disciplines related to the industry, B's directors felt that the best solution was to develop their workers for promotion. B1 was convinced that it was people who would make the difference to the business:

... but it's the people that make the difference. You can have the most wonderful [business] in the world, situated in the right location, but if you haven't got the people then it won't work.

#### **4.5.3 Networking and breaking down silos.**

Networking is key to success, with advantages of people from different parts of the business spending time together, appreciating some of the other issues within the organisation, and breaking down the silo approach.

[M]anagers that attended didn't know the other managers because we are such a diverse, huge organisation ... they tend to work within their directorate or department. So there was a positiveness about networking and sharing [A1].

[W]hat it has done ... as they spend so much time together and they are from massively disparate parts of the business ... is giving them an opportunity to perhaps understand and appreciate some of the other issues outside of their own particular disciplines; and that's always extremely useful to us, because we have historically been quite a silo business [B2].



#### 4.5.4 Strategic Vision includes the culture of the organisation

Organisations are concerned about the culture of their organisation in order to achieve their strategic vision. Programmes are not just about knowledge and skills to achieve the strategic vision: they are about 'the way we do things here'. For some employees this will entail a culture shift that will embrace change.

Executives were committed to transmitting the culture of the organisation, and its message: "it's trying to ensure that managers behave in the way that we feel is appropriate to *[the organisation]*." For some executives, this meant delivering part of the programme themselves. The organisation wanted employees to feel proud to work for *[them]*. With a consistent message of culture: managers working together, who are competent, and feel valued, can do things the organisation's way, and can add value to the organisation.

A1 stressed the importance of culture: "it's trying to ensure that managers behave in the way that we feel is appropriate to *[A]*" and considered that competent, valued managers working together can add value to the organisation.

The thing that we are hoping to have: a group, a camaraderie of managers who understand and can demonstrate the *[A]* way, who are competent, and who can add value to the organisation, and see that is the organisation; and who feel valued, personally, as an individual. So there's the two elements. But as an organisation ... particularly in these times, we need all our people to add value.

A1 also wanted employees to feel proud to work for A: "We want people ... who are competent; able to. All that is important, but we want people to feel proud to work for *[A]*."

The directors of B considered their own involvement essential in transmitting the culture of the organisation. B2 illustrated their commitment to this:

*[A]*s an executive team we're very happy getting involved ... to see how we best fit with them and how they best fit with us and how we select the right people for the programme. And that's probably not something that most boards of executives will actually do: they tend to bat that down the line.

For organisation B, opening mind sets to develop their managers to develop the business was important to cope with changing circumstances. The business had changed considerably and would keep changing so the organisation needed people who could help to influence future changes. Quality input into their people could get quality output from them. B2 explained:

We've got to have people who will not only embrace that change but to influence and make the changes as well. And that's why we are seeking to give better quality inputs to our people, so that we can get better quality of outputs from them.

#### **4.5.5 Improved management skills for competence and consistency**

Both sectors, as the programme name implies, wanted improved management and leadership skills. These were considered to be important for both the managers' professional development and for the organisation to meet its stated objectives. A1 explained:

*[O]ur outcome obviously would be, from a personal point of view: the managers growing; but from an organisational point of view: that the organisation is meeting its calls and objectives.*

Consistency of approach within the organisation, and the competence to be able to deliver services accordingly are considered essential: "overriding all of that is this consistency, this *[A]* way, but competence runs through it all" *[A1]*.

B1 explained the commercial need to focus on their customers in today's business world:

*There's still a lot of margin left in ... solutions for customers; as opposed to ... "I have a piece of business" and "We'll gratefully handle it for you." Those days just don't exist anymore.*

B2 indicated that knowing what the customers wanted and being able to deliver it as well as possible were part of competing for business where customers were looking for added value. "*[W]e've got to be a lot cuter in terms of determining what the customer wants, and making sure that we can actually deliver it as well as possible.*"

#### **4.5.6 Sustainability and succession planning**

WBL courses were potentially part of the long-term sustainability and succession planning of an organisation: to grow its workforce; to enhance its culture; to ensure that core positions will be covered, and to develop new directions. B1 and B2 explained a massive intake of workers during the 1970s meant that over twenty percent of their workers had been with the company for over 25 years, but many experienced people will retire at the same time, so succession planning is an issue. As part of the development of the partnership, organisation B is currently considering taking on three part-graduates with a view to having a rounded group of individuals according to their strengths:

*Because the business is expanding and because the thrust of the business in the future is going to be much more dynamic, and fast-thinking, and customer responsive, we are going to bring on three part-graduates this year. They are going to go through the undergrad programme. We will learn ... whether their strengths are in commercial or operational, and try and make a more rounded group of individuals, consequent to that. And we are going to bring in a fully qualified civil engineer as well to help our succession planning.*

## 4.6 The executives' perspectives of impact of WBL

### 4.6.1 A definition of impact

Organisation A's executives jointly defined impact as: "Impact is outcome: change"; "Something's changed for the better".

### 4.6.2 Individuals

There was evidence from A1 of candidates having found the course useful and enjoyable:

I've certainly gleaned positives from individuals on an individual basis, and I've personally seen, probably one or two individuals grow. ...I know that without exception everyone has enjoyed it; everyone has found it of use.

A1 also thought that most people who attended the course felt valued and invested in, as demonstrated by their employer paying and releasing them from the workplace.

I think there has been an impact. ... I think people ... have felt valued, and invested in. I think most of them ... have felt [A] paying them, releasing them from the workplace, demonstrates the valuing.

B2 considered the 'valuing of people' as important for the individual, and an underestimated positive for the organisation:

[W]hat the people got was an appreciation that we were actually prepared to take some of our investments for them, as individuals in the business. That we were prepared to say: "Yes, OK you can have the time ... the resources; ... the support. Yes, we as a team of executives will participate in the programme." And that's quite a positive, that's largely unquantifiable, but is very positive, because it's about their perception of us, and of the business and how we will engage with them. And I think it's a very positive thing that we've quite underestimated: positive that comes from the programme.

An executive from the private sector noticed an invigorating impact of learning on some individuals without previous tertiary level experience, or who had not studied for over 20 years.

I think it's certainly ... driven up their desire to succeed. ... So I think an appreciation that going back to learn is something that is fresh to them, and I think is a challenge to them, frankly, I think it's invigorated some.

### 4.6.3 The individual's job

Candidates had made meaningful presentations that were useful to the organisation but executive A1 wanted specific evidence of how the programme had impacted the individual in the workplace:

I've seen some fantastic presentations that they have worked on during their development, that have really been meaningful and have been of use to the organisation. ...so all of that is positive. What I don't know is how that has impacted when they are back at the workplace.

A1 wanted to know if employee's management skills were any different after attending the courses, but considered that as being something that would need a one to one conversation with each candidate.

B1 considered WBL a way of developing a workforce that can respond to change; can create its own new opportunities:

It is hoped that the growth of individuals will bring confidence, not just internal confidence, but external confidence that will have potential for benefits in dealing with customers and stakeholders.

Although managers with raised aspirations could be more challenging, they should deliver value back into the business:

I suspect that... their aspirations have been raised ... they should be more challenging now ... both themselves and the company, ... they should recognise some of the things ... about delivery, and delivering value back into the business.

The directors of B explained that the partnership was important for developing their middle managers in order to develop the business:

From a commercial point of view we've had to look at new opportunities; new areas of development. And that has also led to a challenge with our people as well. Some of the things we have been dealing with, with the University, are geared around opening mind sets about management, particularly our middle managers, to allow them to develop into new skills, new knowledge, and potentially new ways of developing themselves, as well as our business.

This final quotation is of immense importance in underlining the expectations and possibilities concerning the impact of WBL on the organisation.

#### **4.6.4 The organisation**

One executive from the public sector felt that there had been improvements, but was unable to give direct evidence of the programme influencing the organisation moving together. This implies an expectation that the programme should help to build a cohesive workforce.

I think certain things have got better in this organisation, whether I can put a thread back to that; it doesn't have to be solely that; but whether I can say the Management and Leadership course has contributed to an improvement, is: question-mark – I don't know. ... .... how much of that has influenced, or is influencing, us as a whole organisation moving together? And that's where I'd be interested.

The executives from the private organisation considered that there would be opportunities and challenges for the organisation with its newly-skilled managers. The highly-motivated, skilled individuals may not have immediate promotion opportunities, but could move to a different part of the business. B1 reflected:

Hopefully, you'll have highly motivated individuals who've come out of a process by which they've been given new skills and will want to apply those skills, and actually you've got to find the opportunity for them to do so. ... They won't necessarily get a promotion; it may mean they move into a different part of the business ... You move sideways before they move on and upwards. It's not about the promotion side, it's about...

B2 interrupted with a vision of the learners creating new wealth:

They won't be guaranteed a bigger pay cheque. But we hope that with the right work from them, the right development, the right creation of opportunities for us, then, it will do.

B1 was aware that the organisation may lose some of the candidates:

We may lose a few of them. .... Whilst we don't want to lose 15 of them, that's the risk you always take with some of these things, and we are quite cognisant of that.

For the private organisation the initial impacts of the course on the organisation were considered probably to be adverse in the short term because the candidates, and their colleagues, have been put under more pressure:

[W]e've had to give people time off from work to do their jobs, and they've become under more pressure, ... But that has put pressure on their management colleagues. And that shouldn't be underestimated, because it has happened.

Senior management had spent time contributing to the programme, although they considered that a positive. They defined the impact as a translation of the values the candidates had learned into the business arena, and that meant a shift in terms of culture: more forward thinking and learning; and acceptance of change culture instead of resistance

#### **4.6.5 Complexity of impact on the organisation**

There was an awareness of the complexity of impact being dependent upon many inter-related influences. Knowing more would be helpful in deciding if the investment was right, and if it gave something back. Understanding barriers to individuals being able to use their new knowledge within the organisation would also be useful so that the barriers could be removed.

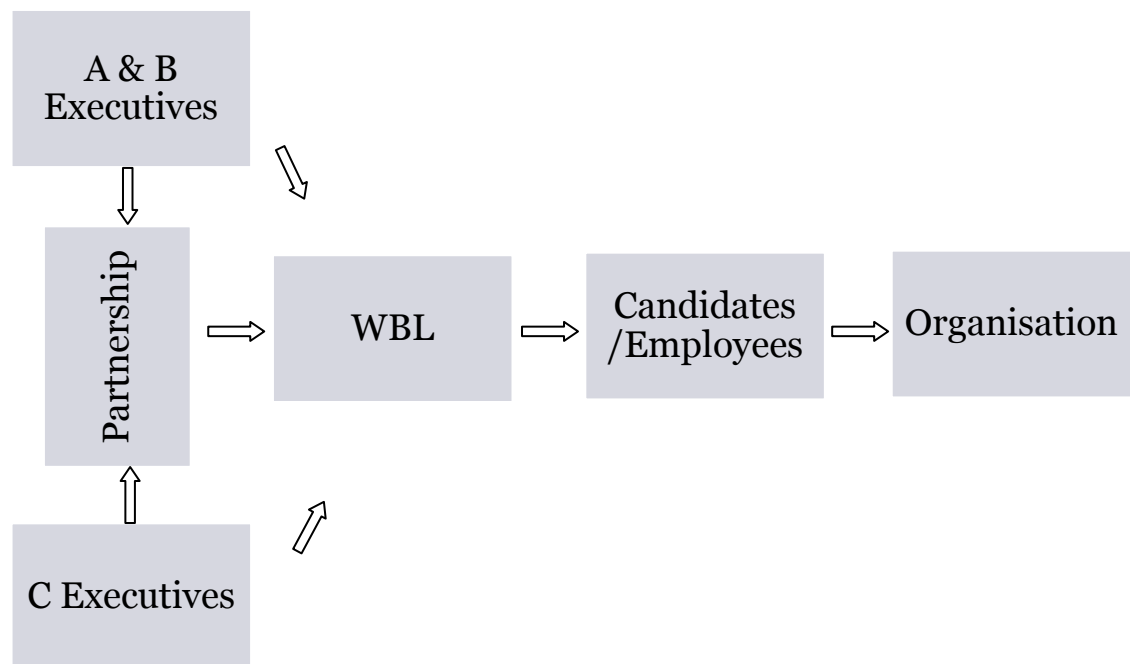
#### **4.6.6 An analytical framework**

The section above summarises the perspectives of the executives of organisations A and B by interpreting their semi-structured interview responses. These perspectives should be contextualised within the partnership process, and also as part of the role of the executives within their organisational context. A complex system can be simplified to communicate specific features while other areas are minimised. The specific features outlined in a simplified illustration of the contexts are those considered important to this research. They are given below before the perspectives of the executives are modelled.

#### 4.6.7 The partnership process

The organisation (either A or B) and the University C form a partnership. The executives negotiate a WBL programme that will meet the needs of employees who are managers or leaders in order to achieve the strategic vision for organisation A or B. The employees, as candidates, take the WBL programme, and their learning moves into the organisation. The focus of this research is on the M2 learning within the organisation. This is a far more complex process than Figure 4.1 below, suggests. It is not a simple input into the WBL course that then becomes learning for the candidates / employees that smoothly moves into the organisation, although it is important to realise that this is the basic process before its complexity can be understood.

**Figure 4.1: The partnership process**



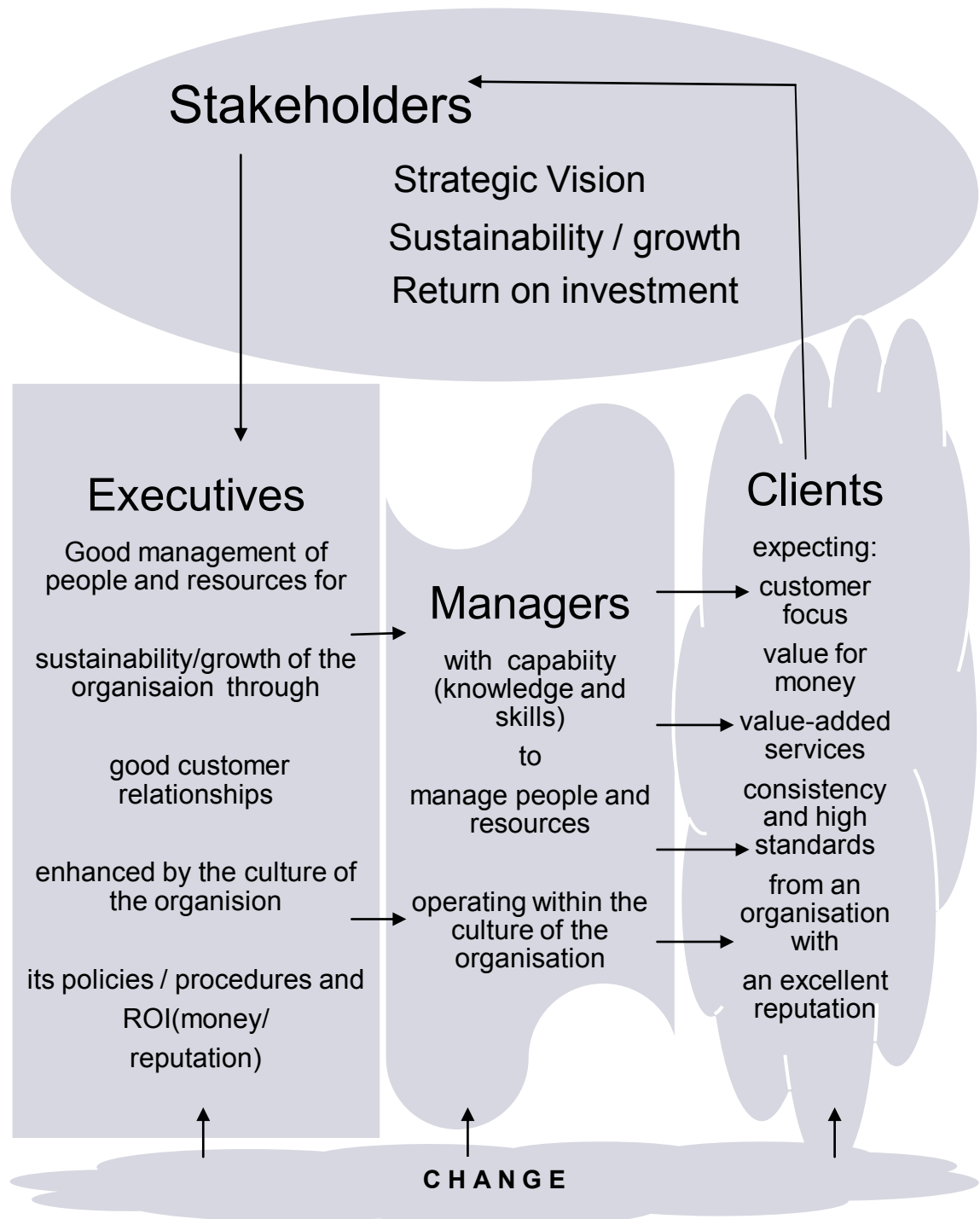
#### 4.6.8 The role of executives

The executives' role is based on their responses to the semi structured interviews and is modelled in Figure 4.2 below.

Executives need to answer to their stakeholders, the investors in the organisation who approve the strategic vision that sets the aims and objectives which should achieve the sustainability (and possible growth) of the organisation, and a return on investment. The strategic vision is achieved within the culture of the organisation by the executives who are responsible for the good management of people and resources that comprise the organisation's assets. To fulfil this responsibility, the executives subdivide various divisions into departments and delegate some of their responsibility to managers of departments, or teams within departments. The executives need to be confident that their managers have the capability to do their jobs well. This is where WBL programmes fit into the organisation. However, the success of an organisation is also dependent upon its clientele. Clients require a customer focus, value for money, added value, high standards

and consistency, and they expect the organisation to have the highest reputation possible. The executives were also all aware of the relentless pressure of change that they were encountering in their roles.

**Figure 4.2: Model of the role of executives**



#### 4.6.9 Executives' priorities

From Figure 4.2 it is apparent that executives are responsible to their stakeholders for fulfilling the strategic vision (including sustainability/growth and return on investment) within the culture of the organisation, and because the overall viability of the organisation is dependent upon its clientele, the WBL course must address the major areas of importance to clients. Managers who take a WBL course are expected to increase their capability. It is therefore imperative that the WBL course will contribute to the candidates' understanding of: the strategic vision; the culture of the organisation; the sustainability (or growth) of the organisation; and the clienteles' needs; in order to maximise the opportunity for the organisation to return a profit, which will give the stakeholders the required ROI. This takes place within the wider context of economic, social, environmental and political change of the region/country/world. The executives' priorities for WBL are modelled below in Figure 4.3

**Figure 4.3: Executives' priorities for WBL courses**



The WBL course will contribute to the managers' capabilities through the development of particular skills and knowledge that should improve the performance of each manager's job within the organisation. The particular emphasis of the executives' priorities will also be influenced by the organisation's sector and its distinct role.

#### 4.6.10 Executives' sector-specific emphasis for WBL

The public sector (A) has an emphasis on consistency of culture based on the embedded enactment of policies. The organisation provides services that must be applied fairly, with respect for the individual, and must give value for money. The flexibility to change the emphasis of their WBL courses to maximise their funding by complying with government



policy is important. Public sector organisations aim to deliver efficient services to a geographically-limited, specific clientele within a limited budget. It may do things differently to improve efficiency, but will still need to conform to external policy directives. Managers in the public sector are generally (although not exclusively) working in offices during the 9am to 5pm working day. Some may be doing specialised jobs requiring specialised qualifications, although some functions may be interchangeable. Workers are more likely to be female, and staff-turnover is low.

The private sector needs to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing competitive markets by providing value-added services that will keep and attract customers. It is looking to add this value through its managers who may find new directions for the business, and can challenge old ways of performing tasks in order to provide new solutions. An opening minds focus is of paramount importance. The logistics industry operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, if required. There is much highly-specialised equipment requiring skilled operators able to conform to high safety standards in potentially hazardous surroundings. The predominately male workforce members were traditionally recruited by word of mouth, with some workers, and family members spending their entire working life within a particular division or department.

**Figure 4.4: Model of executives' sector-specific emphasis for WBL.**

Focus	A	B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Objectives</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Clientele</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfilling lives</li> <li>• Fulfilling objectives</li> <li>• Consistency: a good reputation based on valuing people and doing things 'the A way'</li> <li>• Going the extra mile and giving value for money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial return on investment</li> <li>• Ensuring skills available</li> <li>• Changing mind sets and looking for innovation</li> <li>• Customer focus for increased margins based on added value</li> </ul>

Both sectors are looking to cover key positions for succession planning and the sustainability of their organisations. The private sector is theoretically able to increase its clientele through development, and potentially has greater capacity for generating new income through future growth. This particular organisation has developed substantially in recent years. The public sector, by contrast, in some areas is judged to be successful if it can reduce the number of people using its services.

## 4.7 Summary of the Executives' perspectives

### 4.7.1 The partnership

- Partnerships set up for specific WBL programmes have the potential to grow far beyond the original remit.
- The relationships are considered as long-term and are built on mutual-respect, understanding and trust
- It takes a long time to establish this trust.
- Antecedents to the case study partnerships included
  - mutual respect for the 'image' or reputation of the 'other' organisation: especially as important contributors to the region.
  - Executives
    - already knew each other by first names
    - had previously worked together on civic schemes:
      - with time, space and regional focus opportunities.
- The partnership process is modelled in Figure 4.1.

### 4.7.2 The role of executives

The executives' role is modelled in Figure 4.2 and leads to their priorities for WBL.

### 4.7.3 The priorities for WBL

The executives' priorities for WBL courses are modelled in Figure 4.3:

### 4.7.4 The sector-specific emphasis for WBL

The executives' sector-specific emphasis for WBL is modelled in Figure 4.4

## 4.8 The Candidates' Perspectives (Questionnaire)

### 4.8.1 The approach to data collection and analysis

From a social constructivist view, everything is socially constructed through interactions with others: new knowledge is built on from what is already known; understanding requires participation in the interactions of the group. By observing candidates in their WBL classes, and participating, even if only at the margins, the researcher would be more likely to understand the group and its experiences through its social interactions. This would then inform the construction of a relevant questionnaire for these participants as an efficient way of collecting data. The questionnaire was designed to capture demographic information, and to indicate the candidates' perceptions of the success of the course in terms of its effect on the individuals, their work, and the organisation. When designing the questionnaire, it was important to make the first part of the questionnaire easy to respond to, with questions that candidates may prefer not to answer being towards the end.

Because of this, the analysis works from the middle of the questionnaire to the end, before returning to the initial questions. As the purpose was descriptive understanding rather than quantifying effects, percentages were used to make accurate and fair comparisons between different sized cohorts, but results were then categorised into bands, for ease of understanding for some questions such as those about the success of the course. A 50% pass mark was used to indicate success/acceptability, with bandings given up to three star (or plus) ratings, or minus ratings for those falling below the pass mark.

**Figure 4.5: Bands for easy comparison of results**

Description	Excellent	Very good	Good	Not good enough	Poor	Abysmal
Band Symbol	+++	++	+	-	--	---
Percentage	84 -100%	67-83%	50-67%	49-33%	32-16%	15-0%
Modal band	3	2	1	-1	-2	-3

The most frequent (modal) response was provided as a numerical equivalent to the plus or minus ratings as additional information in a simple format. The questionnaire was followed up with a semi-structured in-depth interview, with a framework to consider the impact of the WBL course on the individual, the individual's job, and the organisation.

#### **4.8.2 Observations**

Most public sector candidates usually ate lunch together at a nearby pub, although some visited the library. Conversations tended to be serious and focussed on the course or assignments. Candidates B ate lunch, provided by their organisation, in their classroom. Conversations tended to be 'jovial' and were generally less-focused on study and more-focussed on shared situations, experiences or people they knew. Case study A candidates worked compliantly and fairly quietly at tasks and were highly focussed. Case Study B candidates often spent time wrestling with what the task was about, or defining what they were doing, or how they could tackle the task before starting it. Both case study groups drew on experiences of work and exchanged snippets of useful information about aspects of work with fellow candidates. Although most candidates were with people they would not meet regularly at work, all candidates were very supportive of each other: comments were positive, even when opinions differed. Collegial support would be an apt description.

Case Study A's sessions, held at the University, were usually well delivered by staff from within their organisation, and were fairly interactive. Working through real-life case studies that were not specifically work-related was difficult for some candidates who wanted examples of direct use to their own situations. One afternoon of short, consecutive sessions with senior people, each presenting potentially valuable insights was difficult to assimilate and gave insufficient time to the candidates to explore relevance to their roles. Senior executives' valuable time showed support and commitment, and enabled candidates to put faces to names. A question / answer forum, or an informal discussion

may have been more productive and could have initiated more meaningful introductions. Candidates appreciated efforts made by colleagues to make learning processes interactive. One said:

I feel sorry for people who have to stand up in front of us. They are not trained to do that. They are doing their best, but it must be difficult for them.

Most of B's Master Class sessions were delivered by University lecturers. Sessions generally engaged and involved candidates in a variety of activities with variations in pace. A few significant sessions were led by one or other of the organisation's directors. When one director presented the final session of a two day Master Class a candidate who rarely contributed to previous sessions suddenly, dynamically, came to life, and attempted to answer every question with arm up-stretched, and interest honed. Whether the motivation was interest in the topic about the organisation, respect for the director, or obligation to reciprocate the director's efforts on a Friday afternoon is unknown, but the change observed was considerable. The whole group had been highly motivated throughout the two days, but was remarkably attentive throughout this final session which was actively focussed on the familiar context (and perhaps comfort-zone) of work rather than academia.

Listening to conversations gave insights into the different cultures of each group. Comments from some of A's candidates indicated obvious time pressures at work, with a sense of resentment about being away from tasks with double work to catch up the following day, and concern about pressure on colleagues. Some took work home because of attending the course. The word 'time' crept into many conversations. This contrasted with B's candidates who took pride in their job, but not at the expense of their own time. They wanted a work-life balance. They worked hard at work, but wanted to use their own time as they wished, with a complete separation between work and the rest of life. 'Respect' and 'reputation' crept into their conversations.

The researcher was invited to the first session of a voluntary Action Learning Set (ALS) of public sector candidates from previous cohorts. ALS members are called group AA to differentiate them from current candidates, A. The main research interest is in group A; AA provides comparisons between graduates and current candidates to see if the impact lasted beyond the course.

Considerable knowledge was shared within the first ALS meeting of previous candidates from various departments. The chair outlined ALS expectations from a previously-circulated document before introducing the first topic: two new recruits were starting a project and the process should be efficient, productive and welcoming. Responses included what each person knew; but were also a tangled web of interconnections: of knowing someone who knew someone else, who had useful information. Markers were given to outline knowledge of processes and contacts, and offers were made for

introductions so that details could be drawn in, advice asked, or ideas exchanged. But it was also so much more, indicating a very close understanding of how various parts of the organisation worked, who the gatekeepers were, how and when to contact them, and the best way of making the organisation's systems work to solve the current problem. This demonstration of combined knowledge was much more than the sum of all its parts and appeared to harness formal and informal systems together in a productive synergy. A large task had been reduced to a manageable project with a long list of helpful contacts and a short list of priorities to offer an efficient start. Some of the knowledge shared was also jotted down by others.

This was individual learning going back into the organisation in an augmented, dynamic way and was helpful. Essential M2 knowledge, probably combined for the first time, was evolving within a community of practice, to solve a particular problem. Without this, two new project workers may have miss-spent up to three weeks, so the equivalent of six working weeks may have been gained from this short input. The benefits included: time-saving for the new recruits; reduction in stress for the leader; sharing of useful information, saving time for the organisation; and working more efficiently for the graduate. This was a practical example of impact on the organisation where the WBL course was the catalyst for the network whose input aided the M2 operation of the organisation. Former candidates from diverse departments, under normal circumstances may never have met together without the WBL course network being the point of connection. Not all information would have come from the WBL course, but the initial relationship-building and trust were established through it.

The aim of observation sessions of A, AA and B was to relate to the groups to better understand them and their interactions. Although trying to observe objectively without preconceived ideas, the researcher's professional experience of classrooms both as a teacher and a teacher educator cannot be dismissed. Experiencing the interactions within the groups helped in understanding the social context, and the mutual understanding of learning that developed, which was useful for ensuring relevance of the questionnaire.

## 4.9 Questionnaire

The intention of the survey was to profile candidates and to indicate the impact of WBL studies. The questionnaire, designed, piloted, and amended before being delivered electronically, sought each candidate's perspective about the course. Data from groups A, AA and B were analysed to profile the candidates to contextualise the remaining research findings. The contextualisation attempts to enter the world of the learner to better share his/her experience through social interactions that construct meaning and understanding.

#### 4.9.1 Questionnaire Respondents

Candidates from A and B were surveyed while studying their WBL courses, with group AA (previous cohorts) surveyed to investigate longer term impact, and also as a means of triangulating results. Ten of the 14 private sector candidates completed the questionnaire; the eleventh partially completed due to IT difficulties; one candidate changed jobs; and two decided not to participate, despite initially signing the consent form. Eight of the nine public sector candidates and six of the 11 Action Learning Set members completed all questions; one current participant, claiming insufficient work-time to complete the electronic questionnaire, took, but did not return, a paper-based form. Six of the eleven Action Learning Set people completed the questionnaire; one more completed only the first six questions. Numbers fully completing the questionnaire were A = 8; B = 10; AA = 6.

#### 4.9.2 Candidates' Profiles

The candidates of Case study A were predominantly female, whereas those of case study B were predominantly male. This can be accounted for by sector differences, where traditionally the public sector is predominantly female, and conversely the logistics sector is predominantly male. Overall there was an equal gender balance. Age-wise, the candidates fell into the middle 3 bands with none in either the oldest or youngest age bands: younger or older workers may be less likely to be taking a WBL course aimed at managers, possibly due to either perceived lack of experience or relevance, from either the possible candidate, or from a selector. A sixth of candidates was aged between 25 and 34, (public sector only); half was between 35 and 44 (equally balanced between sectors); and a third (predominantly private sector) was between 45 and 54.

**Figure 4.6: Candidates' Profiles: age and gender.**

	Total of current candidates	Public sector candidates (A)	Private sector candidates (B)	Triangulation (AA)
<b>Aged 25-34</b>	16.7%	37.5%	0%	16.7%
<b>Aged 35-44</b>	50%	50%	50%	33.3%
<b>Aged 45-54</b>	33.3%	12.5%	50%	50%
<b>Female</b>	50%	87.5%	20%	100%
<b>Male</b>	50%	12.5%	80%	0%

Half of the private sector's candidates were in the ten-year band approaching retirement, available at 55. The older age of candidates may be unique to this particular organisation for historic reasons of restricted access to HE under different directors, due to lack of investment in training resulting in limited opportunities for more responsible jobs. Recruitment and training for leadership and management positions now comes from within the organisation due to a shortage of experienced external applicants.

Only one-eighth of the public sector candidates were in the 45-54 age group, compared with half of private sector respondents, despite later retirement ages for the public sector. Public sector workers keen to study may have opted for one of the four earlier courses,

thus reducing the probability of higher numbers in this age-band; as indicated by the comparatively higher percentage of older candidates in AA and younger candidates in A.

**Figure 4.7: Candidates' Profiles: most recent previous formal education**

	<b>All current candidates</b>	<b>Public sector candidates (A)</b>	<b>Private sector candidates (B)</b>	<b>Triangulation (AA)</b>
<b>Classes in last 5 yrs</b>	17.6%	28.6%	10%	33.35
<b>No classes in last 5 years</b>	82.4%	71.4%	90%	66.6%
<b>Classes in last 10 years</b>	23.5%	42.9%	10%	50%
<b>No classes in last 10 years</b>	76.5%	57.1%	90%	50%
<b>Classes in last 15 years</b>	47%	71.5%	30%	50%
<b>No classes in last 15 years</b>	53%	28.5%	70%	50%
<b>Classes in last 20 years</b>	64.7%	85.7%	50%	66.7%
<b>No classes in last 20 years</b>	35.3%	14.3%	50%	33.3%

More than three-quarters of current candidates had not studied within the last 10 years. More than half had not studied within the last 15 years. Over a third of candidates had not previously studied in a formal class since before 1990 (over 20 years ago). The breakdown of figures by sector shows no study (no change) for the private sector candidates between 2000 and 2004. This confirms information that before new directors were appointed in 2002, only essential safety training was given, and explains higher numbers in the older age group.

**Figure 4.8: Profile of the 'Average' Current Candidate**

	<b>Public Sector A</b>	<b>Private Sector B</b>	<b>Overall A + B</b>	<b>Triangulation Public Sector AA</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Male	Male or Female	Female
<b>Age group</b>	35-44	35-54	35-44	45-54
<b>Most likely to have last attended formal classes over 10 years ago</b>	(57.2%)	(90%)	(>75%)	(50%)
<b>Some further or higher education experience</b>	75%	70%	66.6%	66.6%
<b>Degree/PG</b>	37.5%	0%	16.6%	33.3%

The different age profiles of candidates may be due to sector differences which are also related to qualification levels. The public sector cohort were younger, had more university experience, higher levels of qualifications and more recent education (this may have included traditional education, at school/university for younger candidates). Three of the

eight public sector candidates had attended university; highest qualifications included two postgraduate qualifications, one degree, one diploma and one certificate. The private sector group had only one candidate with previous university attendance; highest level qualifications included four diplomas and three certificates.

#### **4.9.3 Motivation for study**

Motivation for doing the course 'to learn more' was important, very important or extremely important for all candidates; as was 'to be able to do my job better'. Public sector candidates were slightly more concerned with the learning, whereas private sector candidates were slightly more concerned with being able to do their job better. For both sectors the highest motivation was 'to become a better leader/manager', although this was even more important to the public sector than the private.

The majority thought that the motivation 'to be able to get a new job' was 'not very important' or even 'not at all important', although there were a few exceptions who considered it to be a motivation, with slightly more emphasis on its importance to the private sector (which had already announced redundancies) than the public sector (which was expecting cutbacks, but had not actually had retrenchment). However, 60% of public sector and 62.5% of private sector thought it important, very important or extremely important 'for wanting promotion' as their motivation. Whereas 70% of the private sector saw wanting more responsibility as a motivation, this was certainly not the case for the public sector. Interviews with A candidates revealed that recent promotion had already provided additional responsibilities. They considered that the course would help them with their new responsibilities and would also be useful for promotion at a future date. They did not see anything anomalous with this view.

Only two public sector candidates thought 'wanting more money' important. All other candidates scored it from 'not very important' through 'slightly important' to 'not at all important'. The vast majority of both sectors thought that 'the course was affordable' was 'not at all important'. Three candidates took this into consideration, although their fees were covered. They may have considered additional 'hidden costs' to be paid out of personal budgets, such as child-minding, printing, computer equipment, or use of internet, additional travel or 'socialisation'; or perhaps they were appreciative of the course costs being covered.

For the private sector 'concern about possible redundancy' tended to be at either end of the spectrum of choices, with more saying that it was extremely important or very important than had wanted to apply for a new job. This implied that they did not want to move to a new job, but were concerned about being made redundant. This had been voiced in informal conversations during observations, and was included in the questionnaire because it appeared as an important issue. A number of candidates felt less likely to be made redundant by attending the course, because the company would not



want to lose out on their investment. These employees were generally happy with their jobs, and wanted to keep them, rather than to apply for new jobs elsewhere. Some felt that the course was an important backup just in case of redundancy, because it could help with getting a new job.

'Wanting to validate experience' was highly motivational for both sectors. Private sector candidates rated wanting a qualification even higher, although the public sector, with more people with higher level qualifications, initially rated it lower. Wanting an accredited qualification was important to the majority of candidates, but much more so for B with much higher ratings, (80% vs 62.5% of positive Likert scale responses) including 40% saying 'extremely important'. Wanting 'a university accredited qualification' more or less corresponded to 'wanting an accredited qualification', with a slight higher preference for University accreditation for the private sector and slightly less for A. Variations were slight: private sector candidates may value University accreditation more highly, or public sector candidates may accept any accreditation as standardised, and perhaps as a filter that permitted access to the next level of jobs. Fitting around work commitments was again a very important motivation for the vast majority, although a few were not concerned. 87.5% of A, and 70% of private sector B opted for positive Likert scale choices, with 30% of B opting for 'extremely important' and 50% of A opting for 'very important'.

Time flexibility for study was a positive motivator for most candidates (87.5% public sector vs 70% B). 'It was available at a suitable time in my life' had a positive reading from nearly all public sector employees. Although it was important for the majority of B, there were a few that were not motivated by this: they had opted for the course as their insurance against redundancy.

One private sector respondent wrote:

At the time of applying for the course, redundancy was a real threat. The chance to gain a recognised qualification that could be used elsewhere, if need be, was important.

Three out of eight public sector candidates rated 'wanting to meet other people' as an 'extremely important' motivating factor, but the remainder scored negatively on the Likert scale, indicating polarised reactions. It was also the least motivating factor for private sector B, with 7 out of ten responses negative, and only one at the highest rating.

This is surprising when networking appears to be so highly valued within interview responses. Perhaps the Master Class concept with long intervals of individual input does not fall into the category of a social experience because much time is spent working alone. Private sector workers, who value work-life balance, may consider WBL study to be meeting people for work, instead of for 'life' needs.

Candidates from A spent up to 6 hours in an average week studying, with a modal value for 50% of 0-2 hours; for B it ranged up to 10 hours a week, with the modal value for 40%

of 6-8 hours. Private sector candidates spent more private time studying, but with a higher level qualification and fewer master classes than the public sector these results are not as surprising as they first appear.

APeL was not available: it was added to the questionnaire to see if people were aware of what it was, and to see if it was a future motivational factor for some. Just over half of the current cohorts answered the question, so nearly half may not have encountered it. Only respondents from previous cohorts considered it very important: their WBL course had been credited towards further study.

**Figure 4.9 Symbols for modal responses**

Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Slightly important	Not at all important
+++	++	+	-	--	---

Comments are replaced by symbols as shown in figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.10: Candidates' motivations for studying (modal average)**

	<b>A (Public)</b>	<b>B (Private)</b>	<b>Overall A&amp;B</b>	<b>AA</b>
<b>To learn more</b>	++or +++	+	++	++
<b>To be able to do my job better</b>	++	++ or +++	++	++
<b>To be a better leader / manager</b>	+++	+++	+++	+++
<b>To be able to apply for a new job</b>	-	-	-	- (median)
<b>For promotion</b>	+	+ or -	+	+
<b>Wanting more responsibility</b>	-	+ or -	-	++
<b>Wanting more money</b>	- or ---	-	-	---
<b>Course was affordable (see note below)</b>	---	---	---	-
<b>Concern about redundancy</b>	---	--- or +++	---	-
<b>Wanting recognition from others</b>	+ or ++	+	+	--
<b>Wanting to validate experience</b>	++	+++	+	++
<b>Wanting a qualification</b>	+	+++	+	++
<b>Wanting an accredited qual.</b>	++	+++	++ or +++	+++
<b>Wanting a university accredited qualification</b>	+(median)	+++	+++ or +	+++
<b>Fitting around work commitments</b>	++	+++	++	++
<b>Time flexibility for study</b>	++	+++ or +	++or +	++
<b>It was available at a suitable time in my life</b>	+	+	+	+
<b>Opportunity to meet others</b>	+++ or -	-	-	++ or +
<b>Hours of own time for study: average week</b>	0 - 2	6 – 8	4-6	2-4
<b>Apply for APeL</b>	-	---	- or ---	++ or ---

The results above (Figure 4.10) show the modal average (*i.e.* the largest category, or both, if there are two equal categories, or if the spread was completely even, the median or central point was taken).

There is obviously no 'average candidate', but as a theoretical concept it is useful to show the most popular response from each sector. The groups are combined to give the 'average current candidate' (regardless of sector). Group AA is shown for comparison for the purpose of triangulation. Results are surprisingly consistent across all candidates, with few variations.

Fourteen out of 18 (77.8%) of the candidates gave the same rating for wanting a qualification, wanting a validated qualification and wanting a university validated qualification. Two (12.5%) rated the validation and university validation more important than their desire for a qualification. One (6.25%) thought wanting a qualification important, a validated qualification very important, and a university qualification important. One thought it extremely important to gain a qualification, of no importance that it was validated, but important that it was university validated. Only three (16.6%) were not interested in the qualification, and of these one already had a degree, and another a post-graduate qualification. The third answered no importance at all for all motivations, but was not available for interview. This candidate may have been expected to attend the course by the employer, or may have feared redundancy and the threat had been lifted, or may feel that study was not required at this time, or that the questionnaire was not relevant. The researcher's impression from observation sessions was that although prepared to comply with requests, work and life were more immediate priorities than study.

Redundancy was a significant issue, although modal response for redundancy when applying for the course was 'not at all important', there were six people (a third of respondents for this question) who thought otherwise: important (two); very important (one) and extremely important (three).

The private sector candidates showed high levels of motivation in the practicalities of what they could get from the course to put into their work. Pride in their work came out strongly in the follow-up interviews. They had a high awareness of their work-life balance, with a strong distinction between the two, as confirmed by motivations of: study fitting around work commitments; time flexibility for study; and unimportance of meeting others (whereas this was important to both groups of public sector candidates). Their desires for University accredited qualifications and to have their experience and professional work validated came out strongly with group B in initial observations. This was more for their personal satisfaction than for wanting acknowledgement from others. New jobs were not motivators.

Current candidates (A) did not want more responsibility; they wanted to keep their current jobs, to do them better; although the previous cohort were ready to take on more challenges. This fits with the growth that may continue over time while implementing the learning from the course (comparing A and AA) and also with the notion of being motivated for future promotion opportunities. Candidates were asked about motivation when applying for the course, but perspectives can change over time, especially with increasing confidence; however, candidates AA, with an older profile, and an earlier selection, may have been more motivated by promotion initially.

#### **4.9.4 Balanced ratings and rankings of motivations**

A rating scale (corresponding to the symbols used in Figure 4.4) ranging from +3 for extremely important to -3 for not at all important was used. Multiplying the rating by the number of candidates giving that response produced a final score for each category. This 'balanced' score (as in balanced weighing scales) can rank the importance to candidates. Cohort sizes were different, so rankings, not the rating score, must be used for comparisons. Balanced rankings are given in Figure 4.11 below. A fuller version of the table showing the ratings is given in Appendix 3.

#### **4.9.5 Motivations for studying**

The top three motivations of all current candidates are: to be a better leader/manager; to be able to do their jobs better; and to learn more. The next are: to have their experience validated and to gain a qualification and that qualification should be University accredited. They want time flexibility for their study that will provide an accredited qualification and they want their study to fit around work commitments.

Current public sector candidates' priorities are: to learn more and to be a better leader/manager to do their jobs better; they want their experience validated and want the opportunity to study at a suitable time in their lives. They want study to fit around work commitments, and want flexibility to study at a time that is suitable for them. They want an accredited qualification and recognition from others. They would like their qualification university accredited, and would like the opportunity to meet others.

Prior public sector candidates had very similar priorities, but were more concerned with promotion and additional responsibility than those who were currently studying. This is possibly an indication that the WBL course had equipped them to take on these challenges, and may also have given them the appetite and confidence to seek them.

They were less concerned with: time flexibility for study, although perhaps this was a distant memory; recognition from others, perhaps because they had gained their qualification, and confidence; and with study being at a suitable time in their lives – perhaps because they were older than the current cohort, or with study now past, this was no longer significant.

**Figure 4.11: Balanced rankings of Candidates' Motivations for studying**

	<b>AA (Prior Public)</b>	<b>A (Public Current)</b>	<b>B (Private Current)</b>	<b>A &amp; B (All Current)</b>
<b>To learn more</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>To do my job better</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>To be a better leader / manager</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>To be able to apply for a new job</b>	17 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
<b>For promotion</b>	7 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wanting more responsibility</b>	9 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wanting more money</b>	19 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Course was affordable</b>	18 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Concern about redundancy</b>	14 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wanting recognition from others</b>	16 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wanting to validate experience</b>	6 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wanting a qualification</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wanting an accredited qual.</b>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wanting a university accredited qualification</b>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Fitting around work commitment</b>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Time flexibility for study</b>	11 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Available at a suitable time in my life</b>	13 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Opportunity to meet others</b>	11 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Applying for APeL</b>	14 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>

Current private sector candidates want to be able to do their jobs better; they want to be better leaders/managers; and they want a qualification. They want to learn more; to gain a university-accredited qualification; and to validate their experience. They want an accredited qualification; promotion; their study to fit around work commitments; and they want flexibility to study at a time that is suitable for them.

The fact that qualifications featured three times, but still came within close proximity in each cohort's list emphasises the desirability of gaining a qualification that is accredited. A University that misses the opportunity to provide accredited, rather than non-accredited courses may lose business to private organisations instead of building stronger relationships for future study at a higher level.

#### **4.9.6 The least important motivations for study**

All candidates surveyed had their courses fully funded, so it is perhaps not surprising that the course being affordable was the least important feature. However, the questionnaire

asked: 'Did your employer fund your work based learning course?' Response options were: 'fully'; 'partially'; or 'no'. All candidates selected 'fully'. These places were all co-funded. The university had not made this clear; neither had the employer. This has produced a positive impact for the employer in that the candidates think that full cost has been paid by the organisation. There may be positive potential for the university if candidates were aware that it had offered lower rates to the organisation. Candidates were not aware that their study was co-funded: some may have been appreciative if they had known the full cost; it may have been totally irrelevant to others.

The next category with a universally large negative score was one that will challenge many academic authors (for example: Kunzmann and Schmidt, 2009) to re-evaluate their assumptions: 'wanting more money'. Additional money is not a motivation for these WBL candidates.

Candidates for these WBL courses did not have the opportunity to apply for APeL (a possible flaw in their format) so it is not surprising that something that was not accessible (and in a number of cases not even known) was not a motivation.

The next category is another challenge to a strongly-held belief. The majority of these candidates did not want the qualification to be able to apply for a new job. Some opted to do the course because they were concerned about possible redundancy, but this was as an insurance policy in case they were made redundant, rather than because they wanted to look for a new position. The number of people concerned about redundancy was higher than the number of people who were at all motivated by being able to apply for a new job. 'Concern about redundancy' was the next category of least motivation, followed by 'wanting to meet other people'. These last two categories were surprising, because the latter was an assumption previously made by the researcher, based on conversations with Education students whose career choice may indicate their motivation to interact with others; and the former seemed to have been voiced strongly by a few candidates: although redundancy was a concern for them, it was not important for the majority of candidates.

The previous section has outlined the profiles of the candidates, including their motivations for studying. It shows that there are probably more similarities than differences between the public sector and the private sector, but that the emphasis is slightly different for each. The following section gives an analysis of the candidates' perspectives about the impact of the WBL as given in the questionnaire. First the impact at a personal level is investigated, then in terms of doing the candidate's job, then in terms of the organisation.

#### 4.10 Questionnaire analysis: the impact of WBL

This section checks the candidates' perceptions about the courses being beneficial in a variety of ways and looks for significant differences between sectors. The AA group was included to see if there was a longer term effect between the previous and current public sector cohorts. Each group was relatively small. Instead of precise quantitative analysis which would require large data sets to be valid, this looked for tendencies that indicated positive or negative perceptions. Comparisons between groups were based on major rather than minor differences. It was looking for descriptions that lead to understanding, in keeping with the rest of the research.

The analysis of first six questions shows that the candidates considered the WBL programme to be beneficial for them. It provides evidence that the courses are worthwhile for the individuals, their jobs, and their organisations.

The first question aimed to find if there was an improvement in feelings of well-being at a personal level within the work context as a result of WBL studies: as a result of your studies are you: more self confident; more satisfied by your work; happier in your work; and, feeling more valued within your organisation? The second question was concerned with becoming more effective in terms of communications: contributing to team work; communicating with colleagues; communicating with clients; and providing good customer service. The third question was about changes in the job in terms of being easier; performed differently; more effective; and giving or getting better value for money. The fourth question asked about usefulness of the course in terms of relevance to the job; learning about tools, processes or systems; seeing the overview of the organisation; and learning general skills that were transferable within the organisation. Question five asked if the course had helped in terms of developing a better understanding of: the benefits of university education; the organisation's values; dealing with challenges within the job; and organisational culture (the way the organisation does things). Question six was concerned with how often learning from the course would be used, and looked at reflective thinking; customer relationships; managing projects; getting further help; and the way that things were done within the organisation.

As the cohorts were of different sizes numbers of responses from each group could not be compared directly. Comparing data from different sized groups by using percentages is fair, but is difficult to grasp for some people. Percentages were allocated into a three-star tier banding to enable a quick, straightforward comparison. Using one star for 50%–67%; two stars for 68%–82% and three stars for 83%–100% divided the section into three with a slightly smaller middle band. Similarly, allocating the three positive comments of 'a small amount', 'a large amount' and 'a huge amount', a numerical value of 1, 2 and 3 respectively, indicated the modal response for each cohort group. The compact summary

is quicker to comprehend: the more stars the more positive responses from candidates; the higher the number the higher the modal value of the group response.

**Figure 4.12 Symbols replacing percentage bands; numbers replacing comments**

Symbol / number	*	**	***	0	1	2	3
Percentage or comment	50%-67%	68%-83%	84%-100%	No / tiny change	A small amount	A large amount	A huge amount

Question 2 atypically used a five point Likert scale with a central neutral ('no change') point and an additional 'not applicable' category to accommodate any candidate who felt their effectiveness had decreased. Scores of 3, 1.5, 0, -1.5 and -3 maintained the format, but negative scores were not required: responses were positive, neutral, or not applicable.

It should be noted that the vast majority of categories have at least one star, so have a positive response from at least 50% of all candidates within the cohort. This shows the candidates' positive perceptions of the impact of the course on these particular categories which are related to their own feelings of well-being and personal abilities. The areas that do not seem to be acceptable or relevant are 'communication with clients' and 'customer service'. These are discussed below.

**Figure 4.13: Questions 1 and 2 (well-being and effectiveness)**

Q1 & Q2	AA		A		B <sub>+</sub>		A+B <sub>+</sub>	
Confidence	***	1	**	1	**	1	**	1
Satisfaction	**	1	*	0	**	1	*	0.5
Happiness	**	2	**	1.5	*	1	**	1
Valued	*	0	*	1	*	0.5	*	1
Team work	***	1.5	*	0	**	1.5	*	1.5
Communication with colleagues	***	1.5	*	1.5	**	1.5	**	1.5
Communication with clients	*	0		0		0		0
Customer service	***	1.5		0	*	1.5		0

(<sub>+</sub> Two responses: not applicable)

#### 4.10.1 Public sector A and AA

Generally speaking, previous candidates (AA) rated their well-being higher than current candidates, or at a similar level. This may show that the improvements brought about by studying continue to grow over time, or may just be due to different personalities and experiences or other variations between the two groups. When asked specifically 'as a result of your studies': half of current candidates (A) felt more satisfied by their work; 62.5% felt more valued within their organisation; 75% felt happier in their work and 75% felt more self-confident. The Action Learning Set (AA) responses showed that: they were even more satisfied; similarly happy in their work; similarly valued (but with one feeling a huge amount more valued); and all reported feeling more self confident, again with one feeling hugely more confident. In terms of their studies and effectiveness: 50% of the current cohort (A) felt more or much more effective at contributing to teamwork, compared



with 100% of the AA group; 62.5% were more effective at communicating with colleagues, compared to over 85% of AA; 37.5% were more effective at communicating with clients, compared with 57.2% for AA, and the surprising result was that only 25% of the studying cohort felt more effective at providing good customer service compared to 100% of AA. This may have been because the particular focus of study had not yet covered this, or there had not been time to assimilate the skills and to put them into practice; or AA, having self-selected by forming a group and attending voluntary sessions, may have naturally been more confident and outgoing. No-one selected the 'not-applicable' option, available for anyone not dealing directly with clients. Perhaps some jobs were not constantly face to face with the public, and skills still needed to be honed. Alternatively, this may have been considered as an area of personal strength at the core of the job, so did not need to be improved.

#### **4.10.2 Private sector**

Results for the private sector indicated that: 82% of respondents were more self-confident; 73% felt more satisfied by their work; 64% felt happier in their work; and 64% felt more valued within their organisation. It should be noted that the modal response for all of these questions was 'a small amount' with no-one answering a huge amount. As a result of their studies the private sector respondents answered that: 73% felt more effective at contributing to team work; 82% felt more effective at communicating with colleagues; 36% felt more effective at communicating with clients (although for a further 18% this category was not applicable); and 64% felt more effective at providing good customer service. The converse of this is that no change was recorded for 27% for contributing to team work; 18% for communicating with colleagues; 46% for communicating with clients; and 36% for providing good customer service. This may mean that they felt that the course did little to improve this, or alternatively, it may mean that it was already a well-developed personal strength.

#### **4.10.3 Current candidates**

The combined results for current candidates (A and B) showed that 79% felt more self-confident; 67.2% felt more satisfied by their work; 68.4% felt happier in their work and 63.2% felt more valued within their organisation. Generally the mode was 'a small amount, although about half as many again felt that this was 'a large amount'. The biggest spread was for 'feeling satisfied by your work, where 36.8% felt that the answer was 'no, or just a tiny amount (an equal mode to 'a small amount') and one (5.3%) felt 'a huge amount. For the second question, 63.2% felt more effective at contributing to team work; 73.7% felt more effective at communicating with colleagues; both had modes of 'more effective'. The modal values for communicating with clients and for providing good customer service were both 'no change' at 52.6%; and 2 (10.5%) said that it was not applicable.

From these responses it would appear that the course has contributed significantly to the candidates' feelings of their personal well-being at work. There are also improvements in communicating with colleagues. Not all candidates communicate directly with clients, nor are they directly responsible for customer service. In interviews some candidates considered this area to be one of their strengths, since it is a key part of their job. The responses do not indicate a dissatisfaction with this area of the programme, in fact 62% of all respondents felt more effective at providing good customer service.

#### 4.10.4 Questions 3 and 4 (improvements and relevance)

**Figure 4.14: Questions 3 and 4 (improvements and relevance)**

Q3 + Q4	AA		A		B		A+B	
Easier	***	2	*	0.5	*	1	*	1
Different	***	1	**	1.5	**	1	**	1
Effective	***	1	**	2	**	1	**	1.5
Value Vfm	***	1	*	0.5	*	1	*	1
Relevance	***	2	***	2	**	2	***	2
Tools	***	2	**	2	***	1	***	2
Overview	***	2	*	1	***	1.5	**	2
Transferable	***	2	**	2	***	2	***	2

#### 4.10.5 Public Sector comparison between groups

The WBL course made some parts of the job easier and resulted in giving or getting better value for money for 62.5% of current candidates (compared with AA's 87% and 100% respectively). Some parts of jobs were done in a different way or were reported to be more effective for 75% of A, and over 85% of AA. The majority of A found the WBL course relevant (with a minimum of half saying either a large or huge amount). All the previous cohort found all categories useful, with over 70% reporting it as either a large or huge amount. For current candidates, the response, 'no or a tiny amount' was given: by one about relevance to their job; by two candidates for learning about tools, processes or systems, and also for learning general (transferable skills/knowledge that could be used for other jobs within the organisation; and by three candidates for seeing how various jobs fit into the organisation.

#### 4.10.6 Private Sector responses

55% of private sector respondents found some parts of their jobs a small amount easier, 82% found that they were doing parts of their job in a different way (with 27% of these recording a large difference), 73% found that they were doing some parts of their job more effectively (again 27% noting a large difference), and 64% felt that as a result of their WBL course parts of their job were now giving or getting better value for money.

82% found the WBL course useful in terms of relevance to their job, with 64% of these saying that its usefulness was a large amount. Everyone found the course useful in terms of learning about tools, processes or systems, with 36% recording this as a large amount.

Everyone found it useful for learning transferable skills that could be used in other parts of the private organisation, with 55% saying its usefulness was a large amount.

#### 4.10.7 All current candidate responses

All current candidates (A and B) found some parts of the job, easier, done in a different way, done more effectively and giving or getting better value, with a modal response of 'a small amount' giving 47.4 for all except 'effective' which was 36.8%. All had additional responses for 'a large amount', bringing their positive totals to 57.9%, 79%, 73.6% and 63.2% respectively. In terms of being useful, the modal response was a large amount for all (63.2%, 42.1%, 42.1% and 52.6%) with 'a huge amount' featuring for learning about tools, processes or systems, and seeing how various jobs fit into the organisation. Positive responses totalled 84.2% for relevance to your job. 89.5% for learning about tools, processes or systems; 78.9% for seeing how various jobs fit into the organisation; and 89.5% for learning general or transferable skills that could be used in other jobs within the organisation.

The fact that all results were positive shows that candidates considered the WBL course successful in providing potential benefits for them.

#### 4.10.8 Questions 5&6 (increased understanding)

All results for this section were positive, with just one star indicating that at least 50 % of candidates responded positively. The last 5 categories have number values indicating frequency of use, with 3 being daily/almost; 2 being weekly or most weeks; 1 being monthly; 0 being rarely or never. The frequency of use would vary depending upon the particular role of the candidate and the relevance of the category.

**Figure 4.15: Questions 5 & 6 (perceptions of potential benefits /frequency of use)**

Benefits	AA		A		B		A & B	
University education	*	0	*	0	**	1	*	0.5
Organisation's values	***	1	*	1	**	2	*	1
Deal with job challenges	***	3	**	2	***	2	***	2
Way organisation does things	***	1.5	**	2	***	2	***	1
Reflection	***	3	***	3	***	3	***	3
Customer relationships	***	3	***	3	**	3	**	3
Managing projects	***	3	***	3	**	1.5	**	3
Getting further help	***	2.5	**	2	**	0	**	3
Way things are done	***	3	***	2	**	1.5	***	3

The current candidates gave positive responses about the course helping in understanding for all categories, with 63.2% for benefits of University education, 78.4% for organisational values, and 84.2% for both dealing with challenges within the job and the way the organisation does things. All parts included at least one candidate thinking the

course contributed 'a huge amount', while 'the way the organisation does things' had three candidates at the highest level.

The course was considered helpful for understanding the benefits of University education for 64% of private organisation respondents, with responses ranging to 'a huge amount', whereas 73% found it helpful for understanding their organisation's values. Understanding how to deal with challenges within the job helped 91%, with 74% saying either a large amount or a huge amount. Understanding the way their organisation does things was helpful for 91%. The modal answer for the last three categories was 'a large amount'.

The responses to these six questions show that the candidates consider the programme to have had a positive impact on them in terms of: personal well-being at work; improved communications for teamwork with colleagues; improvements in the way they did their jobs; usefulness and relevance to their jobs; a better understanding of the benefits of University education, and the culture of their organisation; as well as ways in which the learning from the course could be used in many other situations.

This is useful confirmation of the success of the WBL programme in providing the skills and knowledge that the candidates consider important for themselves, their jobs, and for other situations, as well as providing a better understanding of benefits of University education, and of the culture of their organisation. This confirmation provides a sound base for this research, because it means that descriptions that candidates give are contextualised within a successful learning experience.

#### 4.11 Questions 7, 8, 9 and 10 (attributed characteristics)

This section was designed to see how candidates ranked, time, knowledge, reputation, money and people from the cultural perspectives of their own work, the university, the public sector and the private sector. Because of the fairly small sample size, and the fact that this set of questions was considering perceptions about organisations, rather than WBL it was decided to combine A, AA and B to see the overall perspective. 5 points were given to first place allocation, 4 to second place, 3 to third place, 2 to fourth place, and 1 to fifth place. The data, analysed by cohort and shown in figures 5.15 to 5.20 were intended to see if the self-ranking corresponded closely to the way the candidates ranked their own organisation (which may be an indication of job satisfaction). The second reason was to see how closely the three types of organisations were perceived in terms of their rankings. Were they all 'just' organisations or were they perceived as different types of organisations, and if so were characteristics either in accord or discord with the individual? A correlation between University and knowledge; public sector and people; and private sector and money was anticipated. During observation sessions with candidates the words 'time' and 'reputation' emerged from conversations more frequently than anticipated

so these two concepts were added to the categories for ranking importance, giving a less-obvious five-point scale.

For Case Study A, Figure 4.16, the first part of the table (a) gives the points allocated. These points were ranked as shown in (b) then re-written to give the appropriate information in (c). For subsequent case study results, only the final ranking is shown. The three tables for each cohort are given in Appendix 3.

**Figure 4.16: Public Sector: current cohort A's perspective**

**a) Points allocated**

	Time	Knowledge	Reputation	Money	People
<b>Self</b>	23	28	23	21	26
<b>Public</b>	16	18	29	37	20
<b>Private</b>	14	19	31	38	18
<b>University</b>	16	22	32	21	29

Ranking according to the points gives this order:

**b) Re-ranking according to points**

	Time	Knowledge	Reputation	Money	People
<b>Self</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Public</b>	5 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Private</b>	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>University</b>	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>

Rewriting to show the categories in their selected rank order:

**c) Ranked order**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Self</b>	Knowledge	People	Time Reputation		Money
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time
<b>University</b>	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Money	Time

Public sector current cohort A ranked perceptions of the public and private sector almost the same, with people at 3<sup>rd</sup> and knowledge at 4<sup>th</sup> position for the public sector, compared to the reversal of just these two for the private sector. Their order of perception of the university is similar to the perception of the public sector, but money has been displaced from first position to 4<sup>th</sup> for the university. There is little similarity between their self ordering of priorities and their work ordering: in fact, it is almost a reversal.

**Figure 4.17: Public sector: previous group AA's perspective**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Self</b>	People	Money	Knowledge Reputation		Time
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time
<b>Private</b>	Reputation	Money	Knowledge People		Time
<b>University</b>	Knowledge	Reputation	People	Money	Time

The perception of prior candidates (see Figure 4.17 above) was identical for their own (public) organisation to current candidates (Figure 4.15) and fairly similar, with some interchange of consecutive positions, for the private sector. For the University, both groups gave a similar order, but previous candidates put knowledge from 3<sup>rd</sup> into first position. Differences in ranking of 'self' priorities were interesting: current candidates put knowledge at the top of their list, and money last, perhaps reflecting their current study as a preparation for their future; time (a preoccupation of current candidates discussed earlier) was also a higher priority. For prior candidates, money was second priority, above knowledge: they may have expected financial reward after their study, and if not rewarded may have considered their knowledge less important than previously believed; the two groups may have different values; small numbers would tend to give inconsistent results.

**Figure 4.18: Private sector: current cohort B's perspective**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Self</b>	People	Knowledge	Time	Reputation	Money
<b>Public</b>	Money	Knowledge	People	Reputation	Time
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time
<b>University</b>	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Money Time	

The private sector cohort put people, knowledge, time, reputation and money as their order of self-priorities. This order was exactly the same self-priority ranking as for all respondents (Figure 4.19 below). Similarly, their ranking of perception of their own type of organisation was identical to that of all respondents. Numbers were re-checked: they were only 11 of the total 25 respondents. They ranked their perception for the university in the same order as the private sector, with the exception of money, which they removed to joint 4<sup>th</sup> place for the university. This again was the same as for the order give by all respondents. There was some variation between their perceptions of public and private organisations. Significantly, they ranked money as of considerable importance to the public organisation, giving it the highest number of points of their allocation, whereas knowledge, people and reputation were almost at the same level (numbered consecutively), with time a little way below.

**Figure 4.19: All respondents (A +AA +B)**

a)

	Time	Knowledge	Reputation	Money	People
<b>Self</b>	71	82	70	54	93
<b>Public</b>	50	65	82	110	68
<b>Private</b>	45	62	95	113	60
<b>University</b>	46	81	94	59	76

b)

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Self</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Public</b>	5	4	2	1	3
<b>Private</b>	5	3	2	1	4
<b>University</b>	5	2	1	4	3

c)

	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Self</b>	People	Knowledge	Time	Reputation	Money
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time
<b>University</b>	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Money	Time

There are more similarities than differences between the perceptions about the public and private sector organisations within each cohort group and also for all respondents, with generally just small interchanges between consecutive lower rankings. The ranking of all respondents' perceptions (Figure 4.19) for the university, as compared to the other organisations, seems to follow an almost identical ordering, and only seems to have money usurped from its organisational supremacy to 4<sup>th</sup> place, just above time, thus elevating reputation to the top position. However, from the points scored, a different picture emerges: the university is perceived quite differently from the other two organisations, (except for time, which seems relatively unimportant for any of the organisations). The university seems to be aligned with the private sector organisation in terms of the organisations' regard for the importance of reputation. It appears to be close to the individual's valuing of knowledge, and disregard for the importance of money, and is closer to the individual's valuing of people than the public and private sector organisations. None of the organisations seem to appreciate the urgency of time felt by individuals in this age of instant communication.

Time and reputation were initially added as a means of spreading the choices between five, rather than three answers, so reputation as the highest ranking of importance to the University was initially surprising: the words 'knowledge' and 'University' are often used synonymously, although Universities are about standards, which must be linked to reputation. The opposite rankings of money and time were surprising, because efficiency is usually measured using time and cost parameters, so the concepts of time and money are often linked. Similarly, money ranking highest for the public sector was surprising, because the public sector centres on people, although, given the lack of funding, the impending cuts in finance, and the accountability of all government departments, perhaps it has become preoccupied about allocation of money in order to provide the services that are the remit of the public sector.

Private sector candidates reversed their own 'self' and private sector order. It was expected that each cohort may rank priorities with some consistency for each type of organisation. Taking the rank order for 'self' for each cohort, and, as originally, giving 5 points for first ranking label (e.g. for Figure 4.19 above, 'self'/1<sup>st</sup> is People, so People would score 5 points) 4 for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3 points for 3<sup>rd</sup> ranking, 2 points for 4<sup>th</sup> ranking and 1 point for fifth ranking. Where rankings were tied (e.g. two 3<sup>rd</sup> rankings) then the higher ranking points (3) were given for each. These points were then substituted for the labels in the same table for each of the organisations and were multiplied by the rankings (5 for first position, 4 for 2<sup>nd</sup>, etc.). The final total for each organisation was then ranked. Figure 4.20 was based on the information from Figure 4.16; Figure 4.21 was based on Figure 4.17 etc.

**Figure 4.20: Cohort A's criteria applied to organisations**

A / current	K=5	P=4	T=3	R=3	M=1	Total points	Ranking
<b>Public</b>	Money	Rep.	People	Knowl.	Time		
	5x1	4x3	3x4	2x5	1x3		
Total	5	12	12	10	3	42	3rd
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reput.	Knowledge	People	Time		
	5x 1	4x3	3x5	2x4	1x3		
Total	5	12	15	8	3	43	2nd
<b>Uni.</b>	R	P	K	M	T		
	5x3	4x4	3x5	2x1	1x3		
Total	15	16	15	2	3	51	1st

Public sector current participants' own criteria rank university organisations above private organisations, which are ranked above public sector organisations.

**Figure 4.21: AA's criteria applied to organisations**

AA (prior)	P=5	M=4	K=3	R=3	T=1	Total points	Ranking
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reput.	People	Knowl.	Time		
	5x4	4x3	3x5	2x3	1x1		
	20	12	15	6	1	54	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Private</b>	Reputation	Money	Knowledge People		Time		
	5x 3	4x4	3x3	3x5	1x1		
	15	16	9	15	1	56	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Uni.</b>	Knowledge	Reputation	People	Money	Time		
	5x3	4x3	3x5	2x4	1x1		
	15	12	15	8	1	51	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Previous public sector participants' own criteria rank private organisations first, public organisations 2<sup>nd</sup> and university organisations 3<sup>rd</sup>. However, it should be noted that there is a very small range between the points for each.



**Figure 4.22: Combined A&AA's criteria applied to organisations**

A & AA	P=5	K=4	R=3	M=2	T=1	Total points	Ranking
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time		
	5x2	4x3	3x5	2x4	1x1		
	10	12	15	8	1	46	<b>2nd</b>
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time		
	5x 2	4x3	3x4	2x5	1x1		
	10	12	12	10	1	45	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>
<b>Uni.</b>	R	P	K	M	T		
	5x3	4x5	3x4	2x2	1x1		
	15	20	12	4	1	52	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>

All public sector candidates, using their own criteria, rate universities first, public organisations second and private organisations third.

**Figure 4.23: B's criteria applied to organisations**

B / current	P=5	K=4	T=3	R=2	M=1	Total points	Ranking
<b>Public</b>	Money	Knowledge	People	Reputation	Time		
	5x1	4x4	3x5	2x2	1x3		
<b>Total</b>	5	16	15	4	3	43	<b>2nd</b>
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time		
	5x 1	4x2	3x4	2x5	1x3		
	5	8	12	10	3	38	<b>3rd</b>
<b>Uni.</b>	Reputati on	Knowledge	People	Money Time	*		
	5x3	4x4	3x5	2x1	2x3		
	15	16	15	2	6	54	<b>1st</b>

\*Note: even without the additional score for joint 4<sup>th</sup> place, the difference between scores still leaves this organisation significantly in 1<sup>st</sup> place.

Case Study B participants, using their own criteria, rank universities first, public sector organisations second and private organisations third.

**Figure 4.24: All respondents' criteria applied to organisations**

All	P=5	K=4	T=3	R=2	M=1	Total points	Ranking
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time		
	5x1	4x2	3x5	2x4	1x3		
	5	8	15	8	3	39	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time		
	5x 1	4x2	3x4	2x5	1x3		
	5	8	12	10	3	38	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>
<b>Uni.</b>	Reput	Knowledge	People	Money	Time		
	5x3	4x4	3x5	2x1	2x3		
	15	16	15	2	6	54	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>

All respondents rank universities considerably above public and private organisations when using their own criteria. The results were summarised in Figure 4.25 below.

When ranking according to cohort perceptions, the university as an organisation scored consistently across all cohorts, with a range of only 3 points compared to 15 for the public organisation, and 18 for the private organisation. In 4 of the 5 cases, the perceptions about the university give the highest score, and so are closest to the cohorts' self rankings. The exception to this is the previous public sector cohort, where the number of participants was low, and points across sectors were closer in range.

**Figure 4.25: Summary of points from own criteria applied to organisations**

	Public organisation	Private organisation	University organisation	
<b>Public sector (current) A</b>	42	43	51	University ranked 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Public sector (previous) AA</b>	54	56	51	Exception: small cohort?
<b>Public sector (all) A&amp;AA</b>	46	45	52	University 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Private sector B</b>	43	38	54	Own ranked 3 <sup>rd</sup> University 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>All (A&amp;AA&amp;B) respondents</b>	39	38	54	University 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Range</b>	54 - 39 = 15	56 - 38 = 18	54 - 51 = 3	

The separate, rather than combined public sector figures were distorted by tied results. There is very little difference between the points for public and private sector organisations, from all cohorts' perceptions (read across the rows) with the most marked difference being from the private sector. As noted earlier, the private sector considered their own sector to be least matching to their 'self' ranking of importance.

The importance of this section is that when candidates were asked about what was important to them at work, and what they consider to be important to the different types of organisations, and their rankings are then applied to the organisations, the university is consistently nearest to their own criteria. University is the best fit for candidates in terms of upholding their personal values. It is a closer match than their own sector.

## 4.12 Questionnaire Summary

The observation of classes enabled a deeper understanding of candidates' social interactions which informed the construction of a questionnaire to profile candidates, their perspectives and motivations. The analysis of the questionnaire responses shows that candidates consider that the majority of the course has had a beneficial impact. The priorities that they ascribe to the organisations show that the University, with ranked priorities of Reputation, Knowledge and People (Figure 4.19), is better aligned to their own work priorities than the organisation that they work for (Figure 4.25). Previous candidates were included for triangulation of results. A surprising consistency of results throughout the different groups was noted, and because of this, comparisons of a 'time-lapse' picture

of short and longer term effects, were made, although entirely speculative, by including previous candidates. The comparison tends to show increased benefits over time, and some things that were not yet apparent in the current group, or were only slightly present had a high profile with prior candidates, although this may be due to factors including different group interactions and experiences, and does not mean that they will increase for the current cohort. The top motivations for studying were identified, (section 4.9.5) with some surprising results within the bottom motivations (section 4.9.6). Additional money is not a motivation for the majority of WBL candidates which challenges the generally-held view that it is the obvious motivation. The vast majority of candidates claim that they are not motivated to apply for a new job as a result of doing the course (although one candidate moved to a new job before the course was completed). This is another widely held view, but both sectors previously provided long-term employment, with directors of B reporting that over 20% of the workforce had been with the organisation for over twenty years. Redundancy was not important to the majority of candidates before taking their course – although it was of major significance to some. The mature age of a large proportion of candidates may be due to sector and historical differences, but may also be a potential indicator of a trend, as the questionnaire shows that candidates hold personal validation in high esteem.

Now that more is known about the candidates, and the conventional success of the programme, the next section looks at the analysis of semi-structured interviews to reveal more of the impact of WBL on the large organisations involved in this research. The candidate's questionnaire responses were scanned before the interview to identify any issues or discrepancies needing further input from the candidate.

#### 4.13 Candidates' Perspectives: SSIs

The initial research question was held in mind when conducting interviews and analysing data: how why and with what consequences does WBL impact the organisation? The techniques of considering the data using a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) were adopted when analysing the data from notes, transcripts and the electronic recordings so that new categories could emerge. Putting data into One Note made it much easier to search for keywords that appeared across a number of candidates than by opening individual Word files. Additionally each candidate's story revealed far more than an analysis of the initial words; and re-listening to recordings often indicated depth of feeling as well as contextualising learning within the individual's lived experience. Some candidates said that much of the course had been 'common sense' but they also illustrated that there had been new learning, or that they had been able to apply their previously implicit knowledge in a different context, not just in contradicting words, but sometimes in degree of enthusiasm within their speech, denoted by changes in pitch, timbre or rhythm. Using a mixture of a grounded theory approach to analysing data:

searching for concepts; and listening to stories with an intuitive, interpretive ethnographic approach; helped to make sense of what was emerging from the complex perspectives of the interviewees, and was key to picking up nuances of meaning to develop appropriate categories. If initial preconceptions had been used, then these may have predetermined what would have been found, rather than allowing categories to emerge from the data itself. There was an almost inevitable structure of the impact on: the individual (as both candidate and employee), the candidate's job, and the organisation, since these can be a nested set that starts from within the individual, and moves out in increasingly larger circles of probably decreasing influence. These particular structures had been built into the candidates' semi-structured interviews, as a MIC generator alternative to that used by Wasserman, Clair and Wilson (2009:367-381). The learning firstly impacts the individual; it may (or may not) be carried into the individual's job, and from there may have a further impact on the organisation itself. When data had been analysed to derive the impacts on the organisation, the executives' perspectives were then reconsidered for comparison.

Life is complex and even under strictly controlled circumstances it would be extremely difficult to prove that a programme of study is the only factor that is directly responsible for a particular outcome because there are far too many variables. At best, it may be fair to say that, from the perspective of those people involved, the programme has, or has not, made some contribution.

Some candidates, from their own prior experience, or from some misconception about standards, examinations and knowledge, may expect a curriculum that is highly content based and is packed with information that could be learned by rote, rather than applied. However, university level work is about higher level learning, where knowledge can be applied to solve a problem or to create something new. WBL focuses upon the application of Mode 2 type knowledge that has generally been developed within the workplace. For some candidates WBL can appear to be almost a non-event because they are already steeped in knowledge that they use frequently, however, the process of reflection makes their implicit knowledge explicit, and therefore more accessible to themselves and others. Once made explicit, this knowledge can seem obvious, or part of common sense, because it has been used implicitly for a considerable time. Candidates may be unaware of the dynamic influence this change from implicit to explicit can have on them, and their ability to apply knowledge. In addition to developing factual knowledge and physical skills people also develop critical skills and changing attitudes, some of which can be related to motivation, confidence and self-belief. Some people may be very aware of these changes as they happen. Others may not realise that they have changed until some incident alerts them to the fact. As Candidate A50 said:

It's that knowledge thing isn't it? You don't know what you don't know until you know that you don't know it. And that is a big thing for me that I didn't know what I didn't know. And of course, once you know, you think that you've always known it.

Similarly, once some people have changed, they think that they have always been as they have become.

The perspectives of candidates who are experts on their workplace give insights into how, why and with what consequences the course is impacting what is happening within their organisation. They know their own workplaces better than any outsider could; they understand the subtle nuances of daily operations and mores that may otherwise remain hidden. A summation of the most important impacts of the course follows: firstly for the public sector organisation and then for the private sector.

#### **4.14 Public Sector SSIs: participants' perspectives**

There were a number of findings from the analysis. Primary categories, mentioned by a majority of candidates, are discussed first. Secondary impacts on the organisation, evidenced by comments from less than the majority of candidates, are discussed later. The primary categories that emerged from the majority of candidates' semi-structured interviews were: the bigger picture, and how things work; the golden thread: networking; reflection; being valued contributes to motivation.

##### **4.14.1 The bigger picture and how things work**

Candidates' consistent answers show that A's organisational structure and culture is effectively accessed *via* the WBL programme. Those newly employed during the previous three years gain an understanding of the bigger picture and how individuals and departments inter-connect, contribute to the organisation's objectives and make a difference to the community. Candidates also cascade public sector requirements for consultation and approval, and rationale of tasks to other team members.

##### **4.14.2 The Golden Thread**

Spontaneous, unprompted mentioning of 'the golden thread' shows an acknowledgement of a uniting but contrived concept that is part of the organisation's culture. This acknowledgement may have been a token gesture of corporate allegiance, but the candidates who mentioned the golden thread referenced their role within this concept and the bigger picture of the structure of the public organisation. From comments given within the interviews it is apparent that the terminology relates the interconnectedness of all roles to the overall strategic plan: linking forward planning, disciplinary procedures, and recruitment and selection; showing how communications move up and down throughout the organisation; how strategic plans work: with appraisals informing team plans, which in turn inform service plans, which then feed into 'our plan', the organisation's overall strategy.

Candidate A60, commenting on the course's impact on the management team and those managed said:

“We are all part of the golden thread, yes, and we all link into it somewhere.”

Candidate A45 explained:

Within the *[organisation]* there's the golden thread system. It's how all the strategies that we have with 'Our Plan' which is the *[organisation's]* strategy, how from under that Service Plans would serve that; team plans would feed into that; staff appraisals should feed into that. And then there's the communications that should go up and come back down again.

Even if the golden thread was mentioned because candidates felt they should, it evidently works well as an artificial concept that conveys the complex workings of the organisation in a way that is understood and to which people can, and do, relate.

#### **4.14.3 Networking**

Candidate A60 summed up networking: “It's being able to talk to other people and to find how we can help each other. There seems to be quite a strong bond created.” The network developed by candidates is valued for: the different perspectives of other services; free, open, confidential discussion, not always possible in immediate work surroundings; strengths and diversity others bring, and realisation of considerable previously taken-for-granted skills and knowledge including facilitating for others. The access to colleagues from different departments raises awareness of particular projects, and gives contacts, advocates, or even champions, within other directorates, speeding up processes through access to strategic people.

One candidate disappointed by colleagues' lack of use of communications through the University's electronic Blackboard wondered if the social networking site, Facebook, would have been more successful. Networking had already brought about additional training for new resources (some resources were acquired through networking) and contributed to savings, or re-circulating funding, by using internal resources and workers, rather than outsourcing.

#### **4.14.4 Reflection**

Reflection is a key feature of WBL. One candidate considers that self-reflection is a personal key change resulting from the course. “I do reflect more than I ever would have done. In fact, that would be the key change in me that self-reflection.” [A59]. An increase in confidence, together with learning to reflect has created further project opportunities for the organisation. Another thinks that reflection about communications improved management style, benefits the team and gets more out of the workforce. A third thinks that mentoring opportunities would further help the reflective process. “For reflection to be happening and implemented the mentoring system needs to be formalised more - more structured” [A38].

A fourth candidate using reflection daily has considerably improved managing the team through reflective practice, and wants reflective coaching for all managers to improve their team's performance through the appraisal system.

#### **4.14.5 Being valued contributes to motivation**

Taking a pride in one's job is related to motivation which is also related to being valued. One candidate who had a demanding 'front line' operational role felt valued and indicated how lack of being valued could prevent people doing their best.

If I don't feel valued; if I don't feel supported; if I don't get training: if I'm not in a decent working environment, then those things are going to be very de-motivating as far as my job goes; and the opposite happens when those things are in place. We all know that, but just to say it, isn't a bad thing is it [A50].

This fits with Maslow's (1970) Theory. Confidence is a characteristic linked with pride, motivation and being valued. It is also a vital aspect of employability skills associated with change.

The following statement demonstrates the importance of confidence for using employability skills and implies that the former candidate is able to combine seeing the bigger picture, being valued, having pride in work, and taking initiative in a highly motivated way.

I have had the confidence to approach senior staff with requests by understanding the background to their decisions and offer suggestions to support the organisation. My work is more focused and therefore more efficient. (AA)

Pennington (2003: 14) takes the need for confidence even further when he states:

Change agents have to empower and encourage individuals to adjust to change and provide them with supported opportunities to increase their confidence and competence in activities central to the changes proposed.

If candidates are to be able to cope with change, or to introduce change into their organisations, they need to be confident and highly motivated, and that implies the importance of them feeling valued.

Candidates are shown that they are valued by participating in the programme. This helps to increase their confidence, and enables them potentially to become agents of change, as shown by Pennington. The increase in motivation links to Maslow (1970) and to the candidates profiles' so the organisation stands to benefit from having highly motivated candidates who wish to do their jobs well.

#### **4.14.6 Candidates' perspectives of impact on the organisation**

The impact of WBL on the organisation is not limited to the popular primary responses given above. By analysing the interviewees' responses, and considering the evidence presented in terms of each impact initially on individuals, then on their jobs and eventually on their organisation, a considerable range of impacts emerged at the level of the

organisation. The way the WBL impacted the organisation was written as statements derived from summarising the related interview responses, initially as summary of the follow-up to each candidate's SSI. The statements are given below before they are discussed individually in terms of how, why and with what consequences the WBL programme impacted the organisation. Impact statements are number consecutively as one list for all three organisations, but each number is followed by the case-study letter to identify its source.

**Figure 4.26: How the WBL programme impacted the public sector organisation**

1A)	Knowledge is shared extensively through networking
2A)	Corporate knowledge is more accessible to a wider range of people
3A)	Customer service standards are raised
4A)	Succession management is improved by cascading knowledge within teams
5A)	A culture of caring can be shaped and shared within the organisation by raising the profile of a project to fulfil its purpose
6A)	The organisation becomes more sustainable by raising awareness of costs
7A)	Resolving challenges helps to make the organisation more efficient and more cohesive
8A)	Innovation, creativity and increased efficiency can be encouraged by providing a safe, supportive environment
9A)	Impacts on the candidate's work role and the organisation may not be recognised
10AA)	Funding bids are more likely to be successful
11AA)	A change of mindset can lead to strategic thinking and increased efficiency
12AA)	The organisation can better coordinate plans to achieve its goals
13AA)	Some employees are continuing with their learning
14AA)	Candidates communicate better because they understand emotional intelligence
15AA)	Sustainability is improved by a liberating flexibility to try out new roles
16AA)	Networks improve efficiency, and can be extended into Action Learning Sets



#### 4.14.7 1A) Knowledge is shared extensively through networking

The course enables sharing, acquisition and application of knowledge previously unknown, or not fully understood by some candidates. This comes about through the opportunities for networking provided by the course within both its formal structure and the social spaces surrounding the course, such as informal conversations during lunch or coffee breaks.

These conversations are initial 'learning conversations' that Critten (2009:130) explores as a notion that is pivotal to an organisation becoming a learning organisation.

I suggest that an organisation which has begun to support work-based learning is in a very good position to become a learning organisation but to do so it has to pay attention to what have been called 'learning conversations' within it and create the necessary infrastructure to facilitate and support such learning from within.

The term 'learning conversations' was first used by Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991) as cited by Critten (2009:132):

"The Learning Conversation grows and spirals as individuals, pairs and team converse, initiating 'learning networks' and a whole system of Self organised Learning throughout the organisation"

Critten (2009:131) puts the case for thinking of organisations as communities of practice, drawing on the work of Argyris and Schön (1978) as well as Wenger (1998), so that by listening to their organisation learning, organisations become learning organisations. Critten cites Dixon (2000:5) in explaining that the starting point for becoming a learning organisation is the creation of a learning culture by people talking about issues they consider important: "If people begin sharing ideas about issues they see as really important the sharing creates a learning culture."

Seel (2010:2) defines organisation culture and explains that it is the result of conversations within the organisation and about agreement on the way to do things or make meanings:

Organisation culture is the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organisation and with its environment.

In other words, culture is the *result* of all the daily conversations and negotiations between the members of an organisation. They are continually agreeing (sometimes explicitly, usually tacitly) about the 'proper' way to do things and how to make meanings about the events of the world around them. If you want to change a culture, you have to change all these conversations – or at least the majority of them.

The stimulus of WBL gives candidates the time and space opportunity, together with a mutual focus for such 'learning conversations,' and can draw on the newly-created community of practice of their learning peers to create their own cohesive network. Members of this candidates' network can act informally to support others through

considering solutions to problems that potentially conflict with the expected standards and norms of the legitimate organisation. The candidates' network could be considered as a 'shadow system' (Stacey, 1996:26) because although formed through interactions in the legitimate system, it consists of informal social and political links that shadow the legitimate system, but have their own rules of interaction. Critten (2009:132) believes that a shadow system can create a 'parallel learning organisation'. Communities of practice thrive within the 'shadow' system of an organisation, and it is where networks of work-based learners may create a 'parallel learning organisation'.

The consequences of this are that some corporate knowledge is explicitly available to more members of the organisation, and may be cascaded to others who are in contact with candidates. Knowledge held by one candidate is shared with others who take this knowledge back to their teams to apply in new ways that are relevant to their particular sections or roles. The shadow network effectively develops into a parallel learning organisation where a culture of learning starts to spread informally throughout the organisation.

#### **4.14.8 2A) Corporate knowledge is more accessible to a wider range of people**

Candidate 38, who had a support role, enjoyed the networking experience but was unaware of its impact on work until illustrating how work-related knowledge was shared with other candidates.

It hasn't impacted my work, as such, but there have been a few times when I've come back to the office and I've contacted people and I've signposted them to things, or I've said, 'Look we've got this on the intranet', or I've mentioned things to some of the ... advisors, like 'Blah Blah was on the course and there were things that they would like to do'. ... [A50], on the course has said 'I wish we could train our team up on this', and I've said, 'We do! We can!' and sent her the dates. So things like that.

This candidate facilitated various departments/directorates accessing previously unknown information, and highlighted the previously-unrealised wealth of knowledge held by the candidate and team.

I've come back and I've said to [R], who's my right hand [wo/man], 'We know so much, but we didn't realise it. We've got so much corporate knowledge, and you don't know that, until you go there, and see that people just don't know about some of the stuff we've got or do.'

This realisation probably increased job-satisfaction within the team. The candidate acknowledged the WBL course for: a definite increase in confidence; an improved approach to line-management (upwards and downwards) that influenced strategic planning approaches; and more considerate relationships with others, enabling them to feel valued. This candidate facilitated access to corporate knowledge and resources by passing on information directly and indirectly. Generalised information passed up the line may improve future communications and access to resources for others at a lower level

within the organisation's structure. This candidate spread the culture of valuing people directly, by assisting other candidates on the course through sharing job-related knowledge and expertise.

The candidate initially felt that there was not a great deal of knowledge derived from the course content as such, but appreciated networking, peer support, and the reinforcement of being able to 'run something by someone with similar issues to deal with, but not directly involved', and that gave confidence. The candidate realised that s/he had a lot of essential M2 'how to' organisational knowledge that could assist others. Wider access was facilitated by improving processes, and directly informing course members of opportunities. Systems are improved because the candidate identified communication gaps within the organisation, and passed on information to rectify the situation. The impact on the organisation is that information processes are improved resulting in greater opportunities for better informed people to access resources to improve skills, efficiency and customer service. Additionally, people may feel more valued: candidates have information shared with them; and the candidate's team members realise the importance and function of their knowledge, and the need for good communications and valuing of people. The need to publicise ways of accessing corporate knowledge is highlighted.

#### **4.14.9 3A) Customer service standards are raised**

The course provided the substance and authority for a candidate to implement changes to the way that a team worked. This was possible because the network of support increased the candidate's resilience and understanding of the culture of the organisation.

I didn't know or understand about other departments and areas, and I didn't know who they were or what they did, so to go on the course, and talk with other people doing totally different jobs, but still need the same sort of management skills, it's been good....

It's made me more focussed and more positive, because I've realised that I'm not on my own. ...

... the way the *[organisation]* does it is different, so it's been useful for me to understand the differences. In the private sector if you want to do something, you just do it. Whereas in *[A]* that just doesn't happen, and you've got to go through different people and get approval, and consultation and everything else, so it's been useful understanding how and why the *[organisation]* does it.

The candidate insisted on higher standards within the team that became more highly motivated with improved customer service.

People are starting to become more positive. They want to improve standards, which they weren't before, and they want coaching, and they want development, whereas they weren't interested before. So I think it is starting to become embedded in the organisation.

Team members may have benefited from higher levels of job satisfaction, better working relationships, and an increased knowledge-base. The organisation benefited from more

efficient use of working time, better customer service, increased value for money and less risk of loss of reputation.

#### **4.14.10      4A) Succession management is improved by cascading knowledge within teams**

Succession management was improved by cascading knowledge from the WBL course within teams. Sharing knowledge and coaching people to involve them in new opportunities increased morale, passion and motivation (examples of M4, M8 and M7). It also perpetuated the culture of valuing people and knowledge and embedded the way of doing things within the team. A number of people would be capable of implementing the knowledge and processes sufficiently to take over a role if the manager left.

I think that the knowledge that people learn within the course, if you are taking that information and are in-putting it back into your team then hopefully the team takes that mode of doing things on board, and hopefully, they do it. If it ever came to the point if I left my role, if anybody from within the team took on my role, then hopefully they would keep that way of doing things in place. I guess that all feeds into succession management. You have people who have gained a little bit of the knowledge, and all the processes who can step in without perhaps having to do any further training or coaching by other people to get them to the level that they need to be for that particular role [A45].

By removal of boundaries, team members gained insights into future roles. This may help retention rates and the organisation may become more sustainable, with reductions in costs and maintenance of services during staffing transitions.

If people know that they have a purpose, they are more likely to stay in that role. It keeps their morale up, and keeps their passion and motivation for being in that role, rather than being disheartened, and moving on, which then affects retention rates within certain roles or departments, in terms of staff turnover.

Mentoring maintained aspects of the culture, such as: implementing strategies that included organisational priorities in planning, report writing and dealing with financial sponsors; monitoring progress and expenditure to encourage efficiency and successful outcomes including value for money and enhanced reputation.

Personally I've seen the benefits of someone allowing me to get involved with things that aren't necessarily part of my day job ... I would like to pass that on to other people who I line manage, so help see them get on, and give them a little bit of an insight, and the opportunity to gain that further knowledge.

The programme provided underpinning knowledge, skills and networking opportunities that value people and value knowledge. This candidate, whose role was mainly operational, has consequently appreciated mentoring opportunities provided by managers who have given guidance and have removed boundaries to provide experience for potential future roles. Seeing the importance of valuing people, valuing knowledge and

appreciating mentoring, the candidate is also prepared to mentor in the future. The cyclic sphere of influence is fuelled by on-going reciprocity.

Again, feeding into the succession planning, you are going to have people who have the insight into what is required in that role, rather than coming into it blind. If someone from outside the authority came into that role, it would take them some time to get into the mode of doing things ... So if for any reason someone wasn't in that role ... you've got someone ready to step in.

The impact of the course on the organisation is that the organisation becomes more sustainable by acknowledging and perpetuating the culture of the organisation. This can be cascaded through the team because people and knowledge are valued, but it depends on managers with insight providing mentoring and networking opportunities to access more resources. The consequences of this impact include: the likelihood of future mentoring to augment the culture of valuing people and knowledge; strategies that include the organisation's priorities in all aspects of planning; report writing aligned to these priorities and requirements of financing sponsors, that monitors progress and expenditure to encourage efficiency and successful outcomes to give value for money and to enhance reputation, by delivering timely services for people. This may also help to secure future external funding. Sustainability of the organisation from within provides financial benefits in retaining, rather than recruiting staff, and maintains services while a key member of staff is being replaced. Valuing of people may lead to a happier workforce, with more highly motivated team members, as exemplified by the willingness of staff to mentor members of their team.

#### **4.14.11            5A) A culture of caring can be shaped and shared within the organisation by raising the profile of a project to fulfil its purpose**

Information about a project, its agenda, and the way it fitted into the *[organisation]'s* priorities was spread through attending the programme. As the project was concerned with valuing people, its promotion enacted the organisation's culture of valuing people. The candidate found that different ideas from the programme helped in raising the project's profile.

It's even little things like, 'Oh, you can put things on the intranet about what you are doing' ... So I've put the e-learning on the intranet ... I didn't know how to do that. And of course, it wasn't that it wasn't some procedure, but often you don't read it until somebody alerts you to: 'Oh, why don't you do that?' [A50]

The help of another course member, through networking, ensured that project information was given greater access *via* the intranet. This also meant that the intranet system better reflected the organisation's work, and was used by more people. In other words, the organisation's information systems were improved. This, with other candidates' promotion of it within their teams, raised the project's profile and encouraged the candidate to promote the project more widely. The raised profile of the project benefits the organisation

by helping to fulfil its mission statement, so meeting the government agenda and impacting clients.

So also ticking their boxes to meet the government agenda; looking at the bigger golden thread from the government to [A]. But my bottom line is that if I can impact on [my clients] through the work I do, then whether operational, or strategic, or working with other people, then that's my job done.

Candidate A50 thought that the programme helped to transmit and shape the culture of caring within the organisation, illustrated by flexibility of working arrangements: "I'm being nurtured". Even with the threat of job cuts, this candidate appreciated the organisation's care:

I feel as though I've been kept in the loop all the way. People have been honest with me about the prospects and share their possible plans and hopes, without their being able to give a definitive.

From the candidate's perspective there was an impact on the candidate, the organisation, and its culture. Networking was spreading project information further. The candidate felt more valued, and consequently was able to do more for the front-line cutting-edge of the project which directly benefits clients. The candidate summed up the programme with "It's been a good course for me, definitely because I didn't know much about management really. I learnt lots!"

#### **4.14.12          6A) The organisation becomes more sustainable by raising awareness of costs**

A project that raised awareness of costs was better implemented as a result of the WBL programme helping candidates to reflect, critique and challenge.

[I]'s interesting to see how things impact on other service areas and it makes you think twice before making a decision, or imposing something, or proposing something because it gives you that perspective on the service areas [A54].

Knowledge and skills from the programme were used to substantiate decisions and to work with authority. The candidate cascaded knowledge from the programme throughout the team and changed ways of working by developing an understanding of the bigger picture and an appreciation of why tasks were required that increased the success of the project.

Whereas before there would have been jobs that I would have to do that were imposed upon me by higher management saying 'you must do this', and the programme has taught me why it's important and the benefits of doing it, and I've been able to pass that on to the team, and they understand, so are much more willing to do it.

The candidate felt that s/he was a better, more-respected manager who could use knowledge and skills from the course to substantiate decisions, work with authority and build a motivated, more efficient team to fulfil a cost-awareness project.

I think that the thing that I've taken most from the course is examining my management style, and learning how I can improve and enhance that for the

benefit of my team. Learning how to better communicate with the team, for the good of everybody really: to get more from the workforce.

Networking through the programme maximised relationships and produced champions for the project throughout the organisation. Cost-savings were made through the project itself, and possibly through improved job-satisfaction that enhances job-retention rates, both of which contribute to the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

It's impacted the organisation in that I think we have a much more efficient ... team. And a much more together ... team, which works well, and performs well, and that will have a direct impact on the organisation in terms of costs ... and all of the things we are aiming for.

The championing of the project *via* the programme network encouraged the candidate to reciprocate by informally helping a number of other candidates to fulfil their own projects so adding to improved efficiency, cost-effectiveness, policy, procedures, timeliness, and perhaps the reputation of the organisation. This facilitative role, the championing, the more successful project, and the networking, all contribute positively to the culture of the organisation that values its members and their environment; all of which add to the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

#### **4.14.13        7A) Resolving challenges helps to make the organisation more efficient and more cohesive**

The candidate was able to bring risks to the organisation to the attention of those at a higher level. A successful funding application, based on information about systems and procedures obtained *via* the programme, was made to remove the risk to the organisation. However, this was possible because the candidate became more confident through the WBL programme.

I was quite a different person before I took this job on, quite a different person. It's been very interesting to see that own personal development over the last couple of years, and I might not have been taking that back step view if I hadn't have done this course. ... 'look there you were then, and there you are now', you know, and if that keeps going, it's nice: I like the me that's over there now.

This candidate's reflection and broadening vision helped in understanding the overview of the organisation's structure and increased knowledge about policy and processes of how the organisation worked.

*[I]t's broadened my vision; not my understanding; but my vision: so that I know more about [A]. I know more about how it works; how the pieces of the jigsaw, do, or don't fit together. Yes, I suppose it has done that. See: reflection - it happens all the time; you can't help it!*

M2 knowledge about the organisation's systems and procedures, obtained through the WBL programme, was used to draw attention to the risk of redundancy for staff whose experience would be required for the next project once a future round of funding became

available. This was possible because the candidate had the confidence and appropriate knowledge to be able to offer a solution to a problem that presented a high risk to the organisation, and had not been foreseen by others.

I now recognise that I am the person I am, from being on this course. So when things flag up that I disagree with, I feel I have a route to some sort of resolution.

Aspects of the organisation's culture, systems and processes were communicated to a wider audience by the candidate because of the WBL networking and programme content. A successful internal bid ensured that experienced members of staff were kept in employment within the organisation until new external funding became available. This resulted in a cost saving (not having to recruit and train new team members); time saving (having an experienced team who knew the culture, systems and people of the organisation, ready to start the project as soon as the new funding was released); a people focus (removing the risk of redundancy) where the valuing of people enhanced the culture of the organisation; maintaining expertise (and corporate knowledge) within the organisation which minimised the risk of non-compliance/non-completion of the new project and was likely to enhance the efficiency and reputation of the organisation that may lead to even more external funding. Because the candidate felt that s/he could resolve a problem through the systems of the organisation, other creative solutions were being considered that could help to make the organisation more efficient and more cohesive.

We are talking about looking at the new way forward... What I'd like to do is to create a couple more posts, and what we should be looking at is making them look like ... PS tasks if you like, so what we are thinking about here is seconding staff in, whose jobs are about to go. So there is that coming into the organisation: that wider view.

Change would happen because there were ways to resolve challenges.

It will be change. It will be that I want to pursue the project ... another thing that from the outset triggered an idea that I was thinking about ... lack of coordination in [A]... I was thinking about my role... thinking, 'What is lacking in [A] is a [...] coordinator.'...

#### **4.14.14      8A) Innovation, creativity and increased efficiency can be encouraged by providing a safe, supportive environment**

New ideas were sparked by incidental conversations

I've enjoyed having a day literally out of the office. That is useful because even in the breaks the other conversations that happen can sometimes spark something. That's been very interesting. So it's not exactly what the course has to offer, it's what's around it for me [A59].

The WBL programme brought together people who would not normally meet.



I think that cross-fertilization must have an impact. The fact that people know me more; and know that I exist more, will have an impact as far as accessing *[my project]* [A50].

A bond created between candidates gives the confidence to discuss issues with peers or others who are not part of their particular line-management structure in a way that is mutually helpful and non-threatening.

I think that because you know them, because you are at uni with them, it's easy to just go to talk to them, and find out things that you wouldn't have found out before ... so tiny, tiny, little things, but making life easier [A54].

Some people felt that they should know all the answers, and appreciate the reassurance of being able to discuss things with colleagues without exposing any lack of knowledge.

The best thing about the course is the people, because sometimes in your role environment you are under pressure. To say, 'look, I'm struggling with this, how would you deal with this?' without looking, not vulnerable, but if I said to a team leader in *[my department]*: 'Look I feel uncomfortable about this', or 'What would you do about this?' then sometimes you think you should know the answers, but when you talk to colleagues inside the organisation, or on the course, you can talk more freely without them thinking: 'Oh you should know that; you should know this' [A38].

The relationships created between candidates taking the WBL programme enable them to think creatively.

*[I]'s* being able to talk to other people and to find how we can help each other. There seems to be quite a strong bond created. ... We tend to bounce ideas off each other [A60].

The respect for confidentiality facilitates open conversations and permits sharing of experience and knowledge.

People are open, and we respect each other's confidentiality, so we know that we can talk openly in the course, and it won't go any further. And although we are all probably at a similar level in terms of grade, I think that everyone is at different levels in terms of experience, and knowledge so we can help each other, and share ideas. The course is good; the content is good, but I think it's the group [A41].

The consequences of sharing of experience were that others were helped to work more efficiently and to incorporate routine tasks in new ways.

I think it's useful to find out from other people ... aspects of the job that we all do ... how they deal with it, and how they do it. ... to find out how you can manage to get that into your daily routine [A60].

The safe environment provided by the course enables managers to improve their skills and to become more confident in their ability to manage through the support of others within the group. This helps the organisation to run more efficiently.

It backs up what you know. You know what you want to do, but you just want to run it by someone, to get their perspective on it, and then it just helps you deal with things more confidently. [A38].

I feel more confident - in my job - and I'm more assertive in my views. I had a particular problem ... and I had the opportunity to share some of the issues informally with other people in a sort of confidential forum, and I got some strategies from that which seem to have worked in handling that difficult situation. So that's been great - which I guess is part of developing your management skills [A50].

The interaction and sharing of ideas (M3) enables the organisation's systems to be used more efficiently to spread information to enhance the culture of the organisation.

The course has given me different ideas. It's even little things like, 'Oh you can put things on the intranet about what you are doing', and I didn't know about that, so I've put *[my project]* on the intranet ... but often you don't read it until somebody alerts you to 'Oh why don't you do that?' [A50]

The organisation's systems and procedures are used to promote change sparked by ideas from discussions. The WBL programme improves candidates' confidence so enabling them to put ideas forward.

It's having the guts there to go in and say, 'These are the ideas I've got, now what do you think, guys?' ... it is the models that I thought about and created, not me solely, but working with the team in the background, but ultimately my concept, that is being carried forward [A59].

#### **4.14.15      9A) Impacts on the candidate's work role and the organisation may not be recognised**

The majority of candidates recognised a personal growth in confidence and ability to reflect (M5) that has come from the course, and tend to realise that it can add to the way that their role is performed.

I'm sure that there are small ways in which I have approached people differently. And I think the more knowledge you have, the more confident you are in the way that you actually speak to people.... And I think by being more confident they give you more respect [A60].

It comes back to the personal stuff that we did. It comes back to that self-reflection. I do reflect more than I ever would have done. In fact, that would be the key change in me that self-reflection [A59].

There is also an appreciation that the access to information and procedures from the course could affect the work role.

*[S]*ometimes you don't know that there's sort of things out there to help you. The last session that we had: budgeting and finance, and I was thinking, that's my manager and my line-manager that deal with all that. But actually, when you look at things and break it down, it is still part of my daily job [A60].

It's underpinned some of the knowledge that I've gained, so in terms of , for example, all the different laws that are around, and how often they change - employment law; that type of thing. That has underpinned my knowledge, and you now understand a bit more why we have to do certain things. So it's helped with that aspect [A45].

There was even surprise that some information had not been overtly provided previously, especially where it was central to some roles.

It's what has come to light, bearing in mind that we are all employed as managers: it's what when we were employed we should have been told about. Really important stuff ... I've used my own things, that I've taught myself, but to discover that the [organisation] has this whole system, an absolute system, and I know nothing about it.

There was recognition of change in others: “[D] really changed the way s/he works. ... I've seen the way s/he works change as s/he's gone through the course.” However, some candidates did not acknowledge change within the way they worked: “I already did that anyway. Just as a person. I recognise what I'm doing now, and I recognise that I'm ticking certain boxes. It's like labelling.”

When the implicit is made explicit, the original implicit knowledge can be shared, and this often expands its context and use by strategic rather than habitual use. However, this candidate did not necessarily recognise the growth, and may genuinely believe that there had not been a change. Candidate A50 identified this when saying: “And of course, once you know, you think that you've always known it.”

Some candidates expected a traditional curriculum that was highly content-based, rather than one where they reflected on how they could apply new knowledge or processes to their own work and experiences. In some cases these expectations were translated into disappointment in course content with a corresponding lack of acknowledgement of the impact of the course on the candidate, the candidate's role and the organisation.

For some people it's about the knowledge, the learning from all the modules. I don't think that it's been that for me, as such. So some people are going to increase their knowledge of corporate things we do: ways they should manage risk, you know, for some it was the first time they had ever seen a risk register. So for them that is knowledge of risk registers. That's not what it's been for me. For me it's been just the networking side of it. In some ways the course hasn't fulfilled everything I've wanted. I don't want to be negative about it, because I've enjoyed the course. But is it enough to have enjoyed that networking side? I think it is, if you can bring it back and think about the way other people think about things, and say, I'll do a bit of that.

Candidates who do not realise their own changes and development may not appreciate the contribution the programme has made. Without positive feedback, the programme may be considered as not being particularly successful, when in fact it has made a

significant difference to their confidence and their ability to reflect, both of which could help the candidate's future professional development.

Increasing confidence and support of the group, together with augmented accessibility to organisational networks, procedures and processes, give a better understanding of the culture of the organisation. These all increase the probability of efficiency, innovation and creativity that could increase the sustainability of the organisation.

#### 4.15 Retrospective perspectives of former candidates

##### 4.15.1 10AA) Funding bids are more likely to be successful

Former Candidate AA61 acquired knowledge and skills directly from the programme, including risk assessment, presentation techniques, information, structures and procedures relevant to meetings, cabinet process and finance. These were useful for accessing and applying for bid opportunities and for engaging help from key people. The former candidate had sufficient confidence and motivation to make changes and to apply for funding to implement them. The programme provided a peer network, with access to more extensive and complex networks *via* these peers, or by other means. Through knowledge of structures, hierarchies of various organisations, and connections with others, this candidate found an opportunity and presented a strong case for funding. In response to a question about the programme's help in applying, the candidate replied:

Lots of things on the course: they do presentation techniques; all the things around having meetings. It's also knowing the hierarchy. We are taught how [A] is structured. But it's not just [A]. You also mix with other people in those groups who have connections with other people: the police force, the PCT, the voluntary sector; and you get to learn their structures as well. You get to understand more what is happening at the top [AA61].

The candidate's successful bid for funding provides a better service for the public organisation's clients to facilitate significant positive changes to the lives of some people. This is likely to enhance the reputation of the organisation, while also reducing long term costs. The candidate's comments about mixing with other people who have connections with others are highly significant because they show that the augmentation of connecting into a network that gives access to what is happening at the top of the organisation, and also other organisations.

##### 4.15.2 11AA) A change of mindset can lead to strategic thinking and increased efficiency

Former candidate AA61 found that the most important learning from the course was a change of mindset so that s/he became a much more strategic thinker.

Changing my mind set from operational to strategic. I was very much operational, but there is this time when you have to pass over into doing strategy. I didn't realise how strategic I had become until I had *[another project]* [AA61].

The candidate's improved time management releases time for other tasks by prioritising the most urgent and important matters, and ensuring that all areas of work are considered on a daily basis. By understanding the structure of the organisation and the processes involved, the candidate considers situations from a management perspective, and, by thinking strategically, solves associated problems.

I think it's helped me to understand where my boss is coming from, and those above him. I think it's changed the way I work. ...I'm thinking, oh my goodness we are not going to get any area based grant, how are we going to keep this going, and what happens? .... And then I put myself in their position, because obviously they have to consider this, and they are thinking around this. It can't be pleasant the decisions they have to make, but I can see why they are having to make them, because of what has been happening [AA61].

By thinking strategically the candidate is a more efficient manager.

I have changed. I'm more structured in the way I do things now. Now if I'm planning something I plan it properly: I don't just go ahead and do something.

This change in outlook results in improvements for the candidate and the organisation, including: less stress, and a better work-life balance; better time-management, more productive working; greater access to networks and funding, and ease of approaching managers for help, as evidenced by the successful bid for funding.

#### **4.15.3 12AA) The organisation can better coordinate plans to achieve its goals**

By aligning appraisals and strategies, plans fit together to initiate required actions to achieve stated goals. Words need to be turned into actions. The actions need to be coordinated.

My appraisal is set to help my boss achieve his, and how he writes plans that fit into the bigger plans. Well actually, I'm now writing plans that fit. My *[project]* plan will fit into the *[H]* plan, which will fit into the *[I]* plan which will fit into the *[J]* plan, which will then fit into the *[K]* plan which then fits into the our communities plan. So you just see how all those plans fit together, and how you have to make sure that what you are saying, what your actions are, all tie in. And you can get so many people, like the *[I]* want you to write something in theirs, and the *[L]* in theirs and *[M]* want you to write something in theirs, and then the National Support Team want you to write something in theirs, so you have lots of bits and you have to try to tie it all together, and keep it focussed to 'this is what we promised'. So we must make sure we achieve this goal [AA61].

By thinking strategically and aligning complex plans with appraisals various parts of the organisation are better able to work together, sometimes with external agencies, to achieve goals. This benefits the organisation in terms of efficiency, funding, achieving its promises and enhancing its reputation; these all contribute to the long term sustainability of the organisation.

#### **4.15.4 13AA) Some employees are continuing with their learning**

The WBL programme gave two former candidates the tools and confidence to successfully apply for their organisation's new internal Rising Stars programme.

There was no way I would have felt prepared to go along to do a Rising Star if I hadn't done the First-line Managers course. That's for definite, because I would have felt that was such a big leap. ... I felt very proud. It was nice to belong to that group. And it made me go for the Rising Star one as well. And just to keep going to see how I can progress [AA61].

The candidate feels valued by the organisation and wants to return the organisation's investment.

That's what I feel: valued....I think I'm a better employee for it. They always say 'What you put in is what you get out,' and I think they've put a lot into me, and I'm grateful for that and so I hope that I'm returning it.

Managers who enjoy learning can be highly motivated and enthusiastic, which may encourage others to learn too.

I've been in on the in-house courses, mainly one day. You always feel that you are learning something. But to actually go on a course: OK you have to apply for it, and have to fill in forms and to be selected, but that was good! And obviously meeting people around the table from different areas was good. But, when I finished, because I'd enjoyed doing it, I actually wanted to carry on. When I saw the rising star ... Well it's started me learning again! And I think it's really good [AA61].

The motivated candidate's successful Rising Stars application allows the candidate to give more to the organisation, and increases opportunities for learning more skills. The organisation benefits from greater efficiency, better return on their initial investment and higher morale within the organisation.

It has kept me motivated. It's made me define my goals and priorities to make sure that they fit in with bigger picture ... It cuts out the trivia... your time is spent on important things... that must have affected value for money. This Rising Stars is something I'm doing extra to my own job; ... fitting it into my current week, so perhaps giving two to four hours. That's got to be a benefit, because they are getting me as an extra resource in the [N] department... It's helped me, and I hope that I've been able to give back to them... it's been really good for morale as well.

#### **4.15.5 14AA) Candidates communicate better because they understand emotional intelligence**

Candidates are able to communicate better because learning about emotional intelligence has improved techniques to help them to respond more appropriately to other people.

Personally it was the way how I learned to manage techniques and communicate with other people. And I've found that very important. ... the characteristics of the people I was actually dealing with, and then applying different techniques to those people to get the same answers. But I was altering the way I acted. I had to more or less use the emotional intelligence routes. And it did work a lot better the second time round: adapting, using emotional intelligence.

Improved communications helped when introducing change within the organisation by giving appropriate support.

[I]t was a case of identifying those resistors, and applying different techniques to get them motivated. The way I talked to them, and gave them a bit of leeway at first so that they were controlling a lot of the process, while I was just standing back and keeping an eye on things. ... The people who needed a bit more help, a bit more assistance, and that's where I was using the techniques that we had actually learned to do that.

This facilitated change and increased efficiency. It avoided some of the alienation of those resistant to change by increasing motivation.

#### **4.15.6 15AA) Sustainability is improved through a liberating flexibility to try out new roles**

One former candidate stepped into a temporary role while someone was on sick leave, and developed a plan of action to improve the quality of service level agreements for the entire organisation (M6, metacognition). The reason given for this was increased motivation (M7) as a result of the programme.

I've become so motivated by what I've learnt. It's that enthusiasm for putting that into practice! I think I've sat back and thought: "This isn't changing. Nothing's changed in the past 12 months, and it's more or less: 'Let me do it! Please!'"

The candidate when asked if it was fair to use the word 'empowered' indicated that s/he thought 'liberated' was a more appropriate description (M5, reflection) because of the opportunity to move forward with something that previously would have been unlikely to have been allowed; but in the current climate s/he was free to be able to take on the task in addition to the normal role.

A lot of it is liberated: where nobody's taken over a task. I had identified the *[new section]* prior to being asked to just supervise it... I'd had an opportunity. And I was so enthusiastic with my plans and talking to the other members of staff, that there was no reason why we couldn't move forward to implement the improvements.

The explanation continued with an account of the vision of one of the CEOs.

[O] is trying to get generic job descriptions. Although my job description is very specific, I think because of the way *[s/he]* is thinking, nobody is actually saying: "No you can't do that." We are short of resources. I think it's allowed me, or allowed my bosses, to not really say, "No, I'm sorry but that isn't in your job description: please don't go in there". To say: "Right, you've got a plan; we've talked about it; we like your ideas; and let's move forward", as long as it doesn't impact on my day to day job. I think that's what it's all about: if it's not to the detriment of my day to day job.

When asked if the programme had removed barriers, the candidate thought that it had provided a temporary opportunity to explore slightly different directions to be able to move forward.

I feel it's allowed people... to find opportunities where they actually want to go in a little bit of a different direction, temporarily.... three years ago I don't think anybody would have allowed me to go into a *[new section]* and actually make changes there. But we haven't got the resources... to be able to do that... I think that has actually allowed us to move forward.

Services were improved. The candidate has positive feedback from the new section and feels recognised (M8) through an acknowledgement of additional stature. Although not rewarded financially, the candidate feels that the experience will be useful for future opportunities or restructuring.

You just have to step outside the box every now and again. As long as it's not to the detriment of anything; any part of your job. I don't see any reason why you shouldn't be able to do that *[AA62]*.

The organisation's potential sustainability may be increased because the candidate has stepped confidently into another role, and has improved services. This shows evidence that this manager has the confidence, capability and capacity for implementing change within the organisation, and that the culture has accepted those changes which would not have occurred without the WBL programme.

#### **4.15.7 16AA) Networks improve efficiency, and can be extended into Action Learning Sets**

The WBL programme networks share learning about successes and failures of other members and guide future decisions. Some members have become champions for projects. One quality assurance candidate is relied upon when other candidates deal with third party suppliers. This evidence emerged from the interviews, but would probably have remained hidden without this research.

*[P]*, who was on the quality assurance side, who was on the course; she became a person I could rely on when we were doing the project with third party suppliers. So the network that way has been good. Something I'd never been able to establish prior to the course *[AA62]*.

The trusting and confidential nature of relationships developed through the programme allowed the sharing of failures as well as successes. This encouraged a sense of belonging and identity within the organisation.

A couple of people on the course ended up being my *[champions]* and I think that the relationships we developed, we had more comprehensive *[feedback]* literally because I understood the way people were and how they worked, and how they thought. I built up a great relationship with them *[AA62]*.

The network facilitated the initial step into other sections that was especially helpful when this support-worker candidate was introducing change, with introductions building credibility and trust.



On a daily basis I found that relationship aspect useful. Change management is usually internal, so there are not a lot of changes that I get involved in outside of the department, but interaction with the *[other sections]* became quite good, because there is probably one person in each section, who has probably been on the course, that you can relate to straight away, so it just allows you that initial step in *[AA62]*.

The stronger relationship also made it much easier to explain a project more efficiently and in greater depth, with uninhibited flows of information, and greater understanding that improved the uptake of changes to be implemented. This improved standards as well as increasing the access to expertise.

I think it's made it easier for them to talk to me, and helped them to fully appreciate what we are trying to get out of the *[project]*. A lot of the time they don't feel they can ask the questions, or they feel a bit embarrassed about asking the questions. So however hard you actually tried to get over what you are trying to achieve, when you've actually met someone before, it opens up the flood gates and the questions become free-flowing. So they get a lot more out of it, as much as I find it easier to talk to the managers, and then the teams after that *[AA62]*.

#### 4.16 Comparison of current and previous candidates' views of impact

There were similarities in both views of impact. The previous candidates were obviously further away from the course in time, however, rather than the impacts diminishing over time, which is the general, expected tendency, they appear to have become increasingly important, with evidence of new opportunities taken up by these particular candidates producing additional significant impact upon the organisation. Success breeds success. All candidates may have felt valued by their successful acceptance onto the programme; previous candidates also experienced success at graduating with an accredited award at a ceremony which was given full endorsement by their organisation, with potential increases in their confidence, their standing within the organisation and their motivation. Previous candidates have taken up opportunities, sometimes in addition to their usual role, that have had significant impacts on the organisation in terms of more efficient operation of the organisation, improved services for clients, access to more funding, and probable gains to the sustainability of the organisation.

#### 4.17 Summary of the impacts on the public organisation

When impact statements were analysed in terms of how, why and with what consequences the WBL had impacted the organisation, it became apparent that the statements could be categorised as networking, sustainability and culture. Although networking could be categorised as part of culture, it was sufficiently significant to form a separate category.

The impacts of WBL from the perspectives of public sector candidates are mainly in the area of the culture of the organisation, which could also include networking; sustainability also features significantly. These are also the executive's dimensions.

**Figure 4.27: Impacts on organisation A (Networking, Sustainability and Culture)**

<b>Networking</b>	
1A) 2A) 16AA)	Knowledge is shared extensively through networking. Corporate knowledge is more accessible to a wider range of people. Networks improve efficiency, and can be extended into Action Learning Sets.
<b>Sustainability</b>	
4A) 6A) 10AA) 15AA)	Succession management is improved by cascading knowledge within teams. The organisation becomes more sustainable by raising awareness of costs. Funding bids are more likely to be successful. Sustainability may be improved by a liberating flexibility to try out new roles.
<b>Culture</b>	
3A) 5A) 7A) 8A) 9A) 11AA) 12AA) 13AA) 14AA)	Customer service standards are raised. A culture of caring can be shaped and shared within the organisation by raising the profile of a project to fulfil its purpose. Resolving challenges helps to make the organisation more efficient and more cohesive. Innovation, creativity and increased efficiency can be encouraged by providing a safe, supportive environment. Impacts on the candidate's work role and the organisation may not be recognised. A change of mindset can lead to strategic thinking and increased efficiency. The organisation can better coordinate plans to achieve its goals. Some employees are continuing with their learning. Candidates communicate better because they understand emotional intelligence.

General topics mentioned in a number of interviews include: the bigger picture and how things work; the golden thread; networking; reflection; being valued (adding to motivation). These topics were initially concerned with impact primarily on the individual, and although this potentially impacts the organisation, it is important to keep the focus on actual

evidence of impact on the organisation. SSIs were analysed, and impact statements were derived from the evidence presented by candidates.

The freestanding statements of impact, when analysed, naturally fall into the main dimensions expected from the programme by the executives. Furthermore, these impact statements were not derived to fill the categories provided by the executives. The impact statements were derived from candidates' SSI responses and an analysis of the impacts on the organisation that candidates claimed in their interviews.

Analysis of the consequences of the impacts described above produces a more detailed list for culture, networking and sustainability impacts as shown in Figures 4.28 and 4.29 below.

These can be categorised into sub-groupings in which there is development as the culture moves from belonging at an emotional level through a transition of growth to an evolving maturity which is itself undergoing constant change. The networking develops from an initial supportive role through a phase that extends trust and credibility through to accessing high level expertise. The sustainability impacts start with a developing identity that moves through mentoring and gaining experience through liberating flexibility to try out new roles into an established reputation.

**Figure 4.28 Culture, networking and sustainability sub-groupings**

<b>Organisation</b> →	<b>Nurturing phase</b> →	<b>Transition phase</b> →	<b>Participating in an evolving culture</b>
<b>Culture</b> →	belonging at an emotional level	transition of growth	evolving maturity which is itself undergoing constant change
<b>Networking</b> →	initial supportive role	phase that extends trust and credibility	accessing high level expertise
<b>Sustainability</b> →	a developing identity	mentoring and gaining experience through liberating flexibility to try out new roles	an established reputation
<b>Individual within new manager/leader role</b> →	Belonging, sharing, identity →	Growth and development of trust and credibility →	Expert with established reputation

Taking each of the three original categories together (reading horizontally) there is an initial nurturing phase of belonging / sharing / identity for each candidate as they are initiated into their new role as manager /leader, then there is a transition phase of growing where they develop trust and credibility through mentoring, before moving into the third phase of participating in an evolving culture with access to high level expertise and the establishment of reputation. These impacts could be considered as phases in

development for the manager, as well as impacts on the development of the culture, networking and sustainability of the organisation itself, because the culture of the organisation is transmitted by people.

**Figure 4.29 Detailed impacts of the WBL programme on the public organisation**

Culture	Networking	Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•BELONGING</li> <li>•caring</li> <li>•supportive</li> <li>•cohesive</li> <li>•raises profiles</li> <li>•resolves challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•SUPPORT</li> <li>•peer support</li> <li>•shares knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•IDENTITY</li> <li>•provides knowledge for succession management</li> <li>•reduces cost</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•GROWING</li> <li>•provides time and space</li> <li>•is a safe environment</li> <li>•promotes innovation</li> <li>•promotes creativity</li> <li>•may be latent</li> <li>•may be unrecognised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TRUST/CREDIBILITY</li> <li>•makes introductions</li> <li>•improves efficiency</li> <li>•extends into Action Learning Set</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•MENTORING</li> <li>•enables successful funding bids</li> <li>•accesses funding</li> <li>•improves quality</li> <li>•provides liberating flexibility to try out new roles</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•EVOLVING STANDARDS</li> <li>•facilitates change</li> <li>•changes mindsets</li> <li>•promotes efficiency</li> <li>•encourages reliability</li> <li>•leads to more learning</li> <li>•improves communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•EXPERTISE</li> <li>•makes corporate knowledge more accessible</li> <li>•strategic alignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•ESTABLISHED REPUTATION</li> </ul>

## 4.18 Private sector perspectives from semi-structured interviews

The private sector interviews generated a list of impacts that also fell into the categories of culture, networking and sustainability.

**Figure 4.30 WBL Impacts on the Private Organisation**

	<b><i>Culture</i></b>
17B)	The programme improves team communications, efficiency and management by treating people according to their needs.
18B)	Directors and employees are developing a closer working relationship.
19B)	A feeling of loyalty has increased.
20B)	Candidates develop skills by building on experience gained from other sources.
21B)	There is a change of mind set.
22B)	The course sparks off interest in new areas of learning.
23B)	Some impacts of the course do not appear immediately.
27B)	The course content may have had no real impact on self, or job for one candidate.
	<b><i>Networking</i></b>
28B)	The development of relationships through networking improves the organisation's efficiency.
	<b><i>Sustainability</i></b>
24B)	A potentially more reliable service is offered by restructuring a department.
25B)	Candidates are aware that the course could be appropriate for others within the organisation.
25B)	Coaching and mentoring could enhance succession management strategies started by the WBL course.

#### **4.18.1 17B) The programme improves team communications, efficiency and management by treating people according to their needs**

Candidate B43, who provided support across the organisation and was also involved with some external liaison work, gave an example of how the course had raised awareness of treating people according to their needs. Consequently, the candidate improved communications by adopted an open door policy and instigating regular team meetings to explain things clearly, and to encourage people to take responsibility. "You need different skill sets for different people. I didn't always recognise that. I recognise their needs." The emotional intelligence component of the programme gives candidates skills to communicate well with others, which help them to motivate their teams. The efficiency of the organisation is increased by improving communications and developing team responsibilities.

Because of the way I work with my team, and speak to them, they get better information from me, so I get better information from them. And I think their skill sets have improved, as a result, as well as my own.

Better communications enable a clearer understanding of what needs to be done, and trust fosters personal development through increasing responsibilities that motivate team members to do a good job, while freeing-up time for the team-manager. By becoming more efficient at gaining information from other teams, less time is spent communicating with others, which improves the team's reputation, increases their job satisfaction and they feel more respected by other departments.

Better communication means that the team is able to do more before they need to bring things back to me... I think we take less time from other areas and that frees up other people's time , and... we are more respected across the group for what we are doing and the results that we are achieving. ... Someone else is feeling that they are more micromanaged by others and has more responsibility with me, which shows that I'm doing something right [B43].

#### **4.18.2 18B) Directors and employees can establish a closer working relationship**

Directors established relationships and communications with candidates by delivering parts of the programme. The situation before the programme was described by some candidates:

We have these massive communication problems here. It doesn't get filtered down, or if it does, it's wrong. ... If he passes it on, it changes, and nobody believes it, because: "Who's he? - They're off the top row" [B42].

There is a lack of communication in the company, and I've raised this with my line manager... It's a bit 'Chinese whispers'... I try to find out what it means and explain it [B43].

The programme gave candidates more access to the directors.

[The director] came in... And he just came across, and it was more believable what he was saying. And I think if he came down... and spoke with the lads, I'm sure [of]the response they would get ... which has happened to us once or twice at Uni. so it's broken down a few barriers if you like [B42].

This access enabled one of the participants to talk more freely with directors:

[T]hese people, they genuinely invest in you; and if you listen to the managers speak, they are so impressive. There's my boss... you believe him, and he talks with sense, and he talks with experience, and he talks with knowledge: and you say: "Right, I want to be on board with this" [B40].

Participants feel valued because they believe that the directors are investing in people.

B42 explained: "I think the fact that I was chosen to go on the course said that." B43 said: "I know my boss appreciates me. ... I guess I do feel more valued."

Being valued is a motivator that promotes a positive culture:

Whereas before, if managers came together there was a general apathy about it, and if you listen to [these directors] they genuinely believe in people and they want you to succeed and they want you to grow. And we've never had that before, well I don't think so, or that's how it appears to me. And that's what I try to pass out to other people [B40].

Candidates feel more valued and have a better understanding of the organisation, its direction and culture when they are informed by directors:

We only ever hear, like the general public, the positive spin, and the press releases. ...I think when you actually hear from the directors about the direction it's going, and why and when, it's more believable: or if it's been put on hold, why. So it's definitely given me better insight into the workings of the company [B42].

Better access to the directors has helped to remove the 'them and us' culture, and improved communications, with candidates feeling that they will be heard:

There was conflict, and there was a 'them and us' culture, and it's broken down a little bit. And once-upon-a-time I wouldn't have dared say anything because he was my boss, whereas now, if it's not right, I feel you can go, it's open, and you can discuss it with them. "This isn't right, we've turned away from this, [B]: you need to get us back on track". And he listens to you, and he says: "Yes, you're right. We need to" [B40].

The importance of communications being cascaded down through the organisation to avoid silos was highlighted:

There was a reorganisation a few years ago. The divisions merged and that was good. It's moved away from the 'them and us' division, but now there are downward silos [B confidential comment].

The programme has improved communications throughout the organisation and has led to a more open culture where issues can be discussed:

I'm really conscious if there is information that I get, and it can be shared, then it should be ... My door is always open, unless I'm on a conference call [B43].

One candidate illustrated that this extended beyond communicating information to promoting a positive professional culture throughout the organisation.

We've done this about communication: cascading the information down, but now for me it's about cascading the culture down. Basically we are cascading the work ethics of the company, if you like, and the directors, and of the managers like ourselves. You want to make everyone feel part of the team. You want to make everyone feel professional; act professionally [B40].

#### **4.18.3 19B) A feeling of loyalty has increased**

Some candidates talked about increased loyalty to either the organisation or their team. B43 commented: "The course has made me more loyal to my team." An increased awareness of emotional intelligence and the bigger picture of the organisation have changed candidates' perspectives.

I've always been a bit different in the way I handled each of them, because people have different needs, but this course has made me more aware of that, so it's made me more loyal. ...I've always been loyal to them. It's made me stand back [B43].

I've tried to involve people... to make them feel... valued. ... I try to give them different roles to do. ... and explain what... I'm doing, and what... I'm trying to achieve... making them feel valued and trusted and responsible [B40].

The feeling of increased loyalty fostered better communications within the organisation, resulting in better relationships between people. This gave a more cohesive workforce with more highly motivated employees.

[T]hey feel that they are trustworthy, because the manager has given and trusted them to take on this work; and they know that it's important. ... I let them sign their names to it ... so then people say, "Hey thanks J" or "Thanks, K: that's really good what you've done", and it's only a pat on the back, but it all makes them feel worthwhile [B40].

"It's nice when teams get feedback from other people. And it means that I'm doing my job properly" [B43].

#### **4.18.4 20B) Candidates developed skills by building on experience gained from other sources.**

By using WBL methods, including reflection, critical thinking and problem solving, candidates were able to interpret new learning by building on previous experiences. This essential feature of WBL was highlighted in SSIs, with candidates referring to learning from previous leadership courses as the basis of impacts that they were discussing. However, they identified situations where the WBL programme had enhanced their previous learning.

Candidate B50 had already instigated major changes within the organisation but recognised from the WBL programme that good ideas could come from people who were line-managed, so encouraged them to try out small changes and report back what did or



did not work. The candidate, having completed the emotional intelligence module, was confident of being able to lead and manage these people:

Understanding myself has helped me to understand other people more as well. I'm very, very tolerant of people, but I'm not tolerant to the point of where I'm a pushover. I would say far from it. I think I've become a lot fairer. I never fight fire with fire anymore.

Experienced workers were motivated to make improvements because they felt valued. A candidate could see advantages in allowing team-members who knew their work well to have additional responsibility and realised that this was an extension of previous skills that could change the culture. However, the primary reason for this was that the candidate had learned to take a step back to see things from other perspectives. Motivated employees were able to make changes which increased team efficiency and the candidate was further encouraged to ask for additional ideas for improvements from all employees within the operational section.

All the stupid ideas will come out, but it only takes one good idea for 100 stupid ideas, for you to think that's a fabulous idea. It may be a little bit off the wall, but if it works, we're in.

#### **4.18.5 21B) There is a change of mind set**

Candidate B50 was involved in a step-change in terms of group problem-solving thinking within the organisation. An issue being considered by a Health and Safety Panel had no limitations on questions about how and why things were done. At the same time this candidate was doing a problem-solving module and revealed:

Somebody asked the question. ... I thought: "Why didn't I ask that question? It's there staring you in the face. It's not being able to see the wood for the trees." That jumped out at me [B50].

This candidate had already undergone a huge learning transformation in terms of emotional intelligence. "Understanding yourself was the biggest learning curve I've been through. I read it and I understood that the person he was talking about was myself." This impacted the way that the candidate handled conflict and was now prepared to look at things from other people's perspectives. The 'eureka moment' was when the candidate realised that increasing the size of group considering a problem increases the probability of finding a new solution.

The problem solving; the understanding; your strength in depth, as in ... not just of the skills of the people you've got, but their minds and the ideas and their rationale for their approaches for whatever you're going to do, your problem. Everyone's from a different angle and they have a different way of looking at an issue. Some are very, very technically-minded. Some are passionate about what they do. ... And you get different perspectives from the more people you include.

The candidate consequently adopted a more consultative leadership style and allowed some line-managed workers to make changes. The culture of the department has changed already, with improved motivation, improved efficiency, more autonomy, and more job satisfaction: “They get full of hell when it's wrong, and they are over the moon when it goes well.”

#### **4.18.6 22B) The programme sparked off interest in new areas of learning**

Candidate B50 was particularly interested in the finance module. “You’ve got to understand about finance. At the end of the day we are all here for an end result.” The candidate asked people within the organisation’s finance department to critique work in this area, and gained assistance in extending learning covered in the finance module.

For me, it's more about building on what I had. The finance side of it: I would have liked to have done another module, understanding how it all actually works. It isn't taking me down that route, so I'm going through it with my boss, and anyone who'll give an answer when I ask a question.

The candidate could see advantages in learning more about finance for doing the current job better and for future promotion opportunities. Relationships were developed with the organisation’s finance department which increases the efficiency of the current role, and flagged interest in finance if future courses become available.

#### **4.18.7 23B) Some impacts of the course do not appear immediately**

Some candidates in operational positions had limited influence for change. Their change of mindset was making some difference to the culture of the organisation but their influence was limited. “The organisation will be more professional. It's a hard dangerous profession ... but as things progress it will bring things more into line with business in general” [B49].

Some candidates may influence the culture of the organisation more when they move to higher level positions. Concern about life-work balance is currently inhibiting some candidates from applying for promotion.

In this organisation we have too many people who have work as first, second and third. And I don't think it's a good thing because you have unbalanced people ... I don't think their priorities are where they ought to be.

Candidates take a pride in their work:

“I enjoy the job I do and I just want to be better at it” [B42].

“Money's not important. It's more important that I do a good job, and I'm recognised for that” [B43].

"I love to have a good reputation.... I think it's pride in their work" [B44].

"Do the job to the best of me ability" [B49].

Some candidates do not want to be associated with anything that detracts from pride in their work. A lack of professionalism is linked with 'presenteeism' (a term introduced by [B47] which explains that some workers are present, but not productive) as indicated by the comment:

I see the way some middle management operate. ... 'Presenteeism' is absolutely rife within this organisation. Don't tell me that you've been here for 12 hours. Tell me what you've done [B47].

Candidates had aspirations for the future, and wanted to do their current job well. The improvements in efficiency through networking were expected to grow as the initial network extended. The programme was seen as providing opportunities for career progression. Promotion was considered positively, although not all candidates wanted it immediately because life-work balance was seen as changing over time. The programme was thought to have produced a "change of attitude, a more professional approach, and a knock-on effect with whatever part of the business ... whether customer service or efficiency".

As Candidate B49 said, the programme will benefit the organisation:

[I/]n the years to come, as we progress our careers and have more influence on the decision process, and more and more people are aware of how things should be done properly, or in a more professional manner. That's why we are on it. Consequences are we are more professional, so business will be more efficient, and at the end of the day that's what the business is here for [B49].

#### **4.18.8 24B) Departmental restructuring offered a potentially more reliable service**

The WBL programme enabled Candidate B44, a support worker, to restructure the department to offer a more reliable service.

We've just restructured: partly suggested by myself - as a single point of contact. So we haven't had time to see as yet. They've always been willing to listen, as long as the feedback is constructive.

The course had improved the candidate's people skills and confidence.

I'm better equipped. My people skills have improved; my confidence to deal with issues has improved; my ability to take on new responsibilities has improved. Some things: a year ago I would have said, "I'm not prepared to do this."

Because the candidate has taken on some of the supervisor's day-to-day responsibilities, those above had more time to develop the business in ways that could increase the value of the organisation.

I think that we are more valuable as a business now, not just because I've been on a course, but because they have a lot more time that they can look at other issues that will affect the business.

Another benefit was that the candidate was available to discuss work issues with those supervised, so their work routines became better organised and more stable.

It's a bit more stable for them. They have someone to go to. They are happy that they can come to me in confidence: raise issues they have.  
It's a little bit more organised now, so their life's a bit more stable.

The reorganisation has re-prioritised tasks so that there is always a contact in the office and the organisation is better served. Processes are more structured: there is less mileage covered in responding to requests with consequent financial savings.

Rather than react to calls, we look at them and prioritise them. It saves on costs. Basically looking for the more efficient way.... You do constantly look to see what you are doing rather than reacting to things.

#### **4.18.9 25B) Candidates are aware that the programme could be appropriate for others within the organisation**

Candidates recognise the impact that the programme has on themselves, particularly in terms of emotional intelligence, and a consequent improvement in the culture of the organisation. Some candidates want the organisation's culture to become more cohesive by offering the course to others. Candidate B44 posited that although there are some very good managers, the few who react too quickly would benefit from doing the course.

There are a few managers out there who been doing it for a good many years who could do with going on the course. It would be helpful. Some are very good, but there are some out there who are knee-jerk, and are not standing back before they send out silly emails or are shouting.

Candidate B43 thought that promotion on length of service had been responsible for some managers not having appropriate skills.

I think that there are others who need to do the course who are more senior to me.  
... Some people go through promotion on length of service and that is the danger.  
... The way some people treat people is appalling.

With more staff completing the course the emotional intelligence aspect could help managers to realise the positive impact of empathising with people, and understanding their feelings in order to motivate them. "You'd have happier staff, if nothing else." [B44].  
The culture of the organisation could become more cohesive and its operations could be more efficient.

**4.18.10            26B) Coaching and mentoring could enhance succession management strategies started by the WBL course**

Candidate B52 expressed the view that succession planning is essential to the company, and considers that training in coaching and mentoring could enable managers to groom those with potential to fill future posts.

There are two things that if you don't get right can affect the company massively and that's training and succession management. ... Management should be trained in coaching and mentoring... in own thought patterns and leadership techniques” [B52].

Succession management and training in general were neglected within the organisation for a number of years before the current Directors were appointed.

Teaching and mentoring, and succession management are two things we don't get right as a company. We need to improve on it drastically. ... We've neglected it as a company. ... Now that we've started the ball rolling we need to keep it rolling.

The company previously had a history of people without appropriate skills or training being appointed as managers:

This company has put people into manager and leadership with no training whatsoever, either because they were best friends with the manager in the past or it was their turn in the queue. Two reasons: neither of them is good.

Training in coaching and mentoring for current managers would enable them to pass on their skills and knowledge to people with potential to become future managers.

To start the ball rolling in succession management is one thing, I don't believe all managers should come from within, but if you have the right people there, then they should be coached and mentored to come forward. But we've got people here who haven't been groomed to be the next ... manager, or... manager, and that's a shame because they've got the potential.

Coaching and mentoring by current managers for potential managers could ensure smooth succession management within the company without disruption in unforeseen circumstances.

With the best will in the world we are all going to move on and pass on, and then there's nobody. If two of us were killed in a car, then the job will always go on, but...

Candidate B52, an operations manager, knew how to do all aspects of the jobs of those line-managed, but acknowledged that the course had been responsible for major improvements for the organisation and its customers because of improvements in leadership and management.

I can take you out ... and tell you how to do anything ... But to be a better manager or a better leader: the course has improved me a lot that way. If I can be better at what I do in here, it means that people out there will be better at what they do out there, and it's going to be better for my company and better for our customers. It sounds like a sales pitch, but it's my view.

Coaching and mentoring could enable B52 to pass on the considerable expertise built up over many years within the organisation, along with recent improvements from the programme, including learning something about coaching and mentoring.

Candidate B43 highlighted the fact that the 13 candidates currently taking the course would make excellent mentors, and indicated that they would all be willing to help as long as time was made available: "Thirteen mentors for the next course, and we'll be happy to do it, but it's allowing time."

#### **4.18.11        27B) Programme content may not have had an impact for one candidate**

One candidate, who had been growing in confidence over time, felt that there was little of relevance to the job in terms of programme content, and saw ways of doing things as being common sense, and as normal ways of approaching the job. The candidate could see benefit for others on the programme in terms of building relationships, but also spoke about developing relationships with others on the course and considered the relationships useful, although just a normal part of the job and nothing to do with the programme. However, a close colleague mentioned the considerable growth in this candidate's confidence, and related it to the programme. Another candidate volunteered this candidate's personal growth as an example of the course helping people to develop beneficial characteristics that were previously unknown to self.

Although the candidate agreed that the course had confirmed that what s/he was doing was right, there appeared to be a greater expectation: "I haven't had that light-bulb moment". The candidate, working at a senior management level, recognised that much of the information was new to most course members but not to self.

We find out more about how the company is operating, what the strategies are, and the way forward, and the wrongs, the rights and things that need to be changing than the guys on the ground. I don't dispute that. So for them I can understand that they find it quite interesting to hear these things. But what we've heard on the course last year, we would have been told that anyway in the course of conversation.

It would appear that the closer people are to working with directors, the better informed they are, and the more aware they are of what is going on. This may mean that some parts of the course are not as significant for these candidates.

Because of what we do and the confidential nature of our jobs we actually get told a lot more. We work in quite an open environment. Our boss is a director and is very open with what he tells us.

I've watched other people and thinking "oh my God, they haven't got a clue"... But for me: yeah, I know that: it's nice to hear that again, and nice that everyone else is hearing it.

The candidate did not acknowledge the change in self that others saw, and probably expected more from the programme in terms of traditional content, rather than changes in attitude. The candidate did not recognise the impact of the course, and hence considered it of minimal value. This was despite conflicting comments from a colleague who had recognised a tremendous growth in the candidate's confidence since the beginning of the course, and another candidate who offered this candidate's growth as evidence of the success of the course at a personal level that translated into improvements in work.

It may be relevant at the end of a programme to give tutor feedback and peer-group comments to candidates in general, about growth, whether or not attributed to the course by the candidates themselves. The appropriateness of some candidates attending certain parts of the course where they have considerable knowledge may be questioned, although, from evidence of observations and SSIs these candidates were in fact a tremendous asset to the organisation as people who present, promote and clarify the 'official' culture by their contributions to group work, discussions and even within individual conversations; additionally, they are key network contacts for future information and clarification about various issues. Organisational culture is of vital importance to the organisation, and the 'font of knowledge' expert is in a unique position to ensure that communications are transmitted accurately both down and up through the organisation. Few people feel that they can actually give feedback to the top of the organisation, and the 'font of knowledge' candidate with courage, may be vital for opening up communication channels.

#### **4.18.12            28B) Networking improves the efficiency of the organisation**

The programme develops relationships between candidates, and the networks help the efficient operation of the organisation.

I am lucky that I deal with everyone. But there are still people that I don't know. But the benefit of this course is that it develops relationships... I need to work with these people [B43].

Relationships reassure people. They help people to realise that they are not isolated, and that others have found solutions to problems that are similar to their own. Sharing experiences provides different ways of viewing a problem.

From a company point of view meeting with people from different departments and interacting with them has been good. You can get isolated within your own comfort zone - the place where you go to work every day. It's good to see other parts of the company and hear stories about them: what problems they have - similar problems to our own - It's good [B52].

Candidates who develop an appreciation of emotional intelligence through the programme may develop better relationships. Candidates who have the support of the network feel that they can call on people in other departments without having to go through multiple layers of formality. The resultant long-term relationships remove barriers and increase efficiency.

It makes things flow better, if you know someone. It's like networking. It does help... It does make things work better.... It's improved relations between departments. The benefit is... I can ring Y direct, and say "Y, we need ..." [B42].

This operations candidate also had a better understanding of the organisational roles of other candidates and enjoyed belonging to an extended network:

It's like all the cogs, and who does what and why they do it. And it's just nice if you see someone, know their name and say "Hello"; and.. to point out to someone: "That's so-an-so; they work in the 'whatever' office." [B42].

Candidate B58 had benefited from the emotional intelligence course by understanding problems better, which helped in finding solutions in a confidante / mentoring role for colleagues, using support systems within the organisation. This improved efficiency at work.

I really enjoyed the emotional intelligence....The guys do tend to off-load onto me... Luckily we have... the backup ... with problems that wouldn't reach my boss, so we can help guys... it does affect their work.

This candidate also felt that the emotional intelligence and problem solving courses were useful in finding solutions for customers.

[T]rying to understand other people's problems, makes it easier for me to find a solution for them, especially customers, I deal with third party customers and instead of giving them a straight yes or no, I do look at things a little bit differently, and I'm not frightened to ask for advice.

Candidate B58, whose role was mainly in support, felt that networking had improved business in a variety of ways that made life easier for everyone.

Networking? Brilliant! ... One of the strongest things is meeting people I wouldn't normally meet and a lot of interaction with them and that's definitely improved business.... When I go to different areas, and I know these people, they may not be related to the problem, but they will know someone who is.... The job is done in exactly the same way... but It just makes life that much easier.

The explanation put forward was that the relationship created a bond of friendship that made people want to help to solve a problem, or to work around it, and that this was very much under-valued by organisations.



It's more efficient in time, resource, and ownership of solutions, rather than problems. You are talking to your friend, your buddy, not just your colleague: how can I help him? That's got to be a good thing. There may be certain people you may not get on that well with, but because you can put a face to a name, and you know the problems they've got, you say: "Let's get this sorted out for them". That's got to be worth millions to a company if they can extend that.

#### **4.19 Summary of candidates' perceptions of impact: private sector**

The impacts of the WBL programme on the private sector organisation from the perspectives of the candidates were culture, networking and sustainability.

##### **4.19.1 Culture**

The culture is more cohesive because of improvements to team management; closer working relationships between directors and employees; an increased feeling of loyalty; and a change of mind set. Additionally, candidates can develop skills by building on experience gained from other sources, and interest has been sparked in new areas of learning. However, not all impacts are immediately apparent, and there may be no real impact for one candidate. As with the public sector organisation, the impacts of the WBL course on the private sector organisation are mainly concerned with the culture of the organisation.

##### **4.19.2 Networking**

The biggest and most mentioned impact of the course was the development of relationships through networking. Networking improves the efficiency of the organisation by giving direct access to each area of work to provide the solution, with a motivational bond of friendship or to redirect the question to the most appropriate person.

##### **4.19.3 Sustainability**

A potentially more reliable service, implemented by restructuring a department, ensures that there is always someone available to help. Improved internal organisational systems potentially offer a more reliable service to customers, so contributing to the organisation's efficiency and reputation. Long-term sustainability and succession management strategies could be enhanced by others taking the programme, and by extending coaching and mentoring.

**Figure 4.31: Additional WBL impacts from the private sector organisation**

Culture	Networking	Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•improves team management</li> <li>•brings directors and employees closer</li> <li>•increases feelings of loyalty</li> <li>•further develops skills gained previously</li> <li>•sparks interest in new areas of learning</li> <li>•latent impacts may not appear until candidates are promoted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•development of relationships</li> <li>•facilitates introductions to others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•enables restructuring</li> <li>•provides a more reliable service</li> <li>•awareness that WBL could be appropriate for others within the organisation</li> <li>•improved management strategies</li> <li>•awareness that coaching and mentoring could enhance management strategies started by WBL</li> </ul>

## 4.20 Impacts on both organisations

The candidates' perceptions of impact on their organisation can be summed up in three categories: culture, networking and sustainability. Networking, the impact that was considered to be of most importance to candidates is discussed first.

Networking is basically about building relationships, but it is also an important means of accessing and transmitting knowledge that may or may not be stored within the official documents of the organisation. The network additionally supplies access to 'the expert' with experience of using that knowledge, and advice about the easiest, most appropriate and effective ways of implementing that knowledge including identifying potential hazards or barriers, and ways of circumnavigating them. The network can provide the distilled knowledge precisely and appropriately, without having to spend considerable amounts of time searching through much information to ensure that nothing vital is missed. It also identifies and may provide access to 'gate keepers'. The network is key to the learning of the organisation, as identified by Critten (2009) and discussed above in impact 1A. The impact of networking is that it provides the 'who to' to give the 'how to' (M2) knowledge that is held within the informal structure of the organisation (and in the shadow organisation). This 'know who' knowledge will be referred to in the next chapter as M3, and is one of the characteristic features of WBL that is used in developing the Courtyard Model.

The sustainability of the organisation is concerned with issues such as succession management and risk management which are vital for the survival of the organisation. If key positions do not have adequate understudies the organisation cannot operate effectively. This is where complex knowledge, strategic relationships and expertise come

together to define a role that cannot be learned overnight. There are unique characteristics of the role that can be learned over time, and this learning can be enhanced by mentoring, but there is no substitute for experience. This is not just about 'knowing that' (Mode 1 knowledge); it is also about 'knowing how' (Mode 2 knowledge). It is also highly dependent upon effective communications and networking that can provide the most effective answers through 'knowing who' (perhaps as Mode 3 knowledge) to approach to solve the problem quickly.

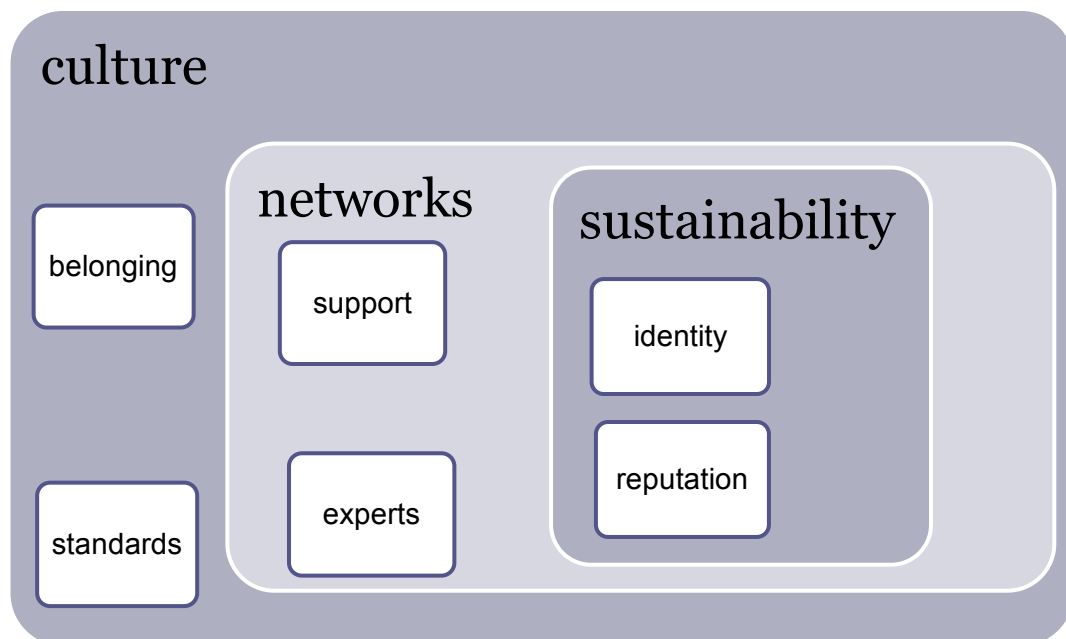
A number of candidates from both organisations were highly aware of the importance of coaching and mentoring for their own advancement, and for those who would become their understudies. Mentoring uses reflection, which accesses implicit knowledge that is based upon a critical incident, and creatively imagines alternative scenarios, and their consequences, so that decisions can be made about the most appropriate strategy for a similar situation in the future. Reflection and its associated knowledge will be called M5 in the following chapter. An organisation requires a succession plan which identifies key roles, potential understudies, and career progression with appropriate education, coaching and mentoring to ensure that the organisation is capable of operating through short and medium term crisis points if one or more key people are no longer available. Sustainability goes much further: it is about reducing risk, minimising costs and maximising resources. Sustainability is about monitoring things, and subsequently taking appropriate decisions. This is a form of metacognition, or thinking how to think, which will be referred to as Mode 6 knowledge later. There is a fine balance between these complex interactions: areas such as cutting maintenance of equipment, or additional costs for safety procedures or investment in education of staff may offer short term savings at horrendous long-term cost to the organisation. Risk management is related to sustainability in that reputation determines value. An organisation is only as good as its reputation. Reputation is based on good relationships and trust: if either of these, or the financial viability of the organisation is put at risk, then so is sustainability. It is the task of the stakeholders to decide the balance of these factors when deciding the organisation's strategic vision. Values such as trust and integrity will be referred to as 'Teg' in the following chapter.

The impact of culture of the organisation is about 'the way that we do things'. This is the M2 knowledge of the organisation that provides the 'how to' within the context of what the organisation is and aspires to be. Culture is something that is constantly evolving; it is in a constant state of change. The impacts that the candidates identified were concerned with making the organisation a better organisation at its core business by: making the organisation more efficient and more reliable; providing a better service (or product) for its customers; improving relationships, increasing loyalty, and being caring; developing identity and autonomy; and being valued and valuing others. Relationships, loyalty and caring are related to emotional intelligence (EI). The EI knowledge (referred to later as M4) that is developed through taking the WBL programme is important for delivering these

impacts. Additionally relationships, loyalty and caring are feelings and emotions that are concerned with belonging. This type of knowledge will be referred to as Mode 8 in the next chapter.

The candidate's motivations are to be able to do the job better, by having the skills to be able to manage others and to be a good leader. These motivations or drivers will be referred to later as M7. Culture is about pride in doing the job to the best of one's ability. This is where the motivations of the candidates and the impact of the WBL programme on the culture of the organisation coincide and produce a synergy that is satisfying for the candidates and beneficial for the organisation.

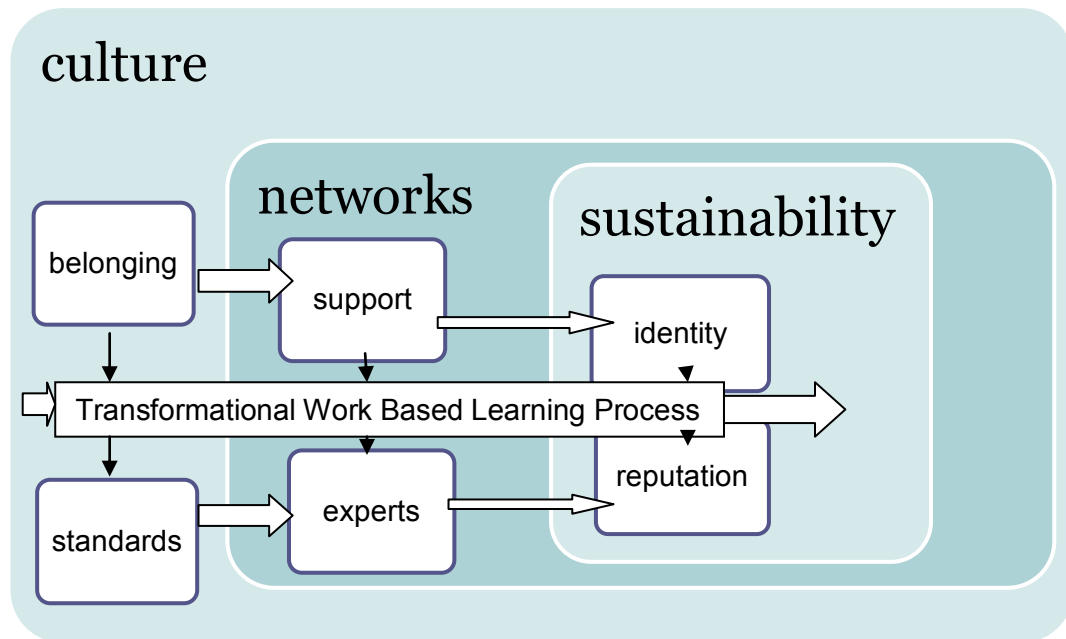
**Figure 4.32: Impacts of WBL on the organisations can be categorised as culture, networks and sustainability**



There are two strands that run through these three categories: the belonging culture leads to the supportive network that leads to the sustainable identity of the organisation; and a culture that is concerned with standards has access to a network of experts that build a high reputation that is essential for the sustainability of the organisation.

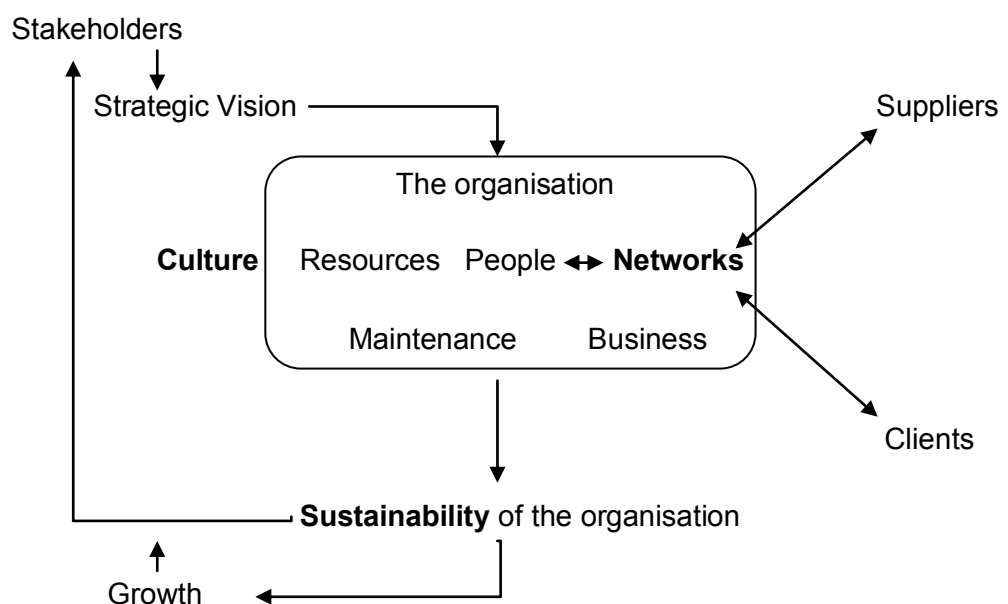
However, there is also a transformative WBL process that links these apparently separate strands for the candidates themselves: where belonging to the culture can grow into adopting and promoting higher standards; where the support of the WBL cohort network can introduce candidates into various communities of practice where experts informally mentor others so that their expertise is shared and the candidates become experts themselves; and where an initial identity as a new manager within the organisation, can through mentoring, help to establish a reputation, which is itself based upon standards and expertise together with the ability to network, all of which contribute to sustainability.

**Figure 4.33: The transformational impacts of the WBL process on culture, networks and sustainability**



The transformational impacts on the candidates mirror the transformational impacts on the organisation which mirror the transformational impacts on the candidates. The two are inextricably interlinked with culture transmitted by people. Putting these three areas of WBL impact into the executives' model shows how the WBL has met the executives' requirements to give them a return on their investment.

**Figure 4.34: Model of executives' requirements showing the employees' main perceptions of the impacts of WBL on the organisation and its culture**



The model shown in Figure 5.34 shows the impact of networks, culture and sustainability on the organisation as identified by candidates in both sectors.

The strategic vision of an organisation usually includes return on investment for the stakeholders by providing business products or services for clients in order to ensure the sustainability (and possible growth) of the organisation.

WBL, according to candidates, has positively impacted the culture (including networks) and the sustainability of the organisations. The candidates' top motivations for study were to be a better leader / manager, to be able to do their job better, to learn more, to validate their experience and to gain a qualification. These motivations are almost a guarantee of quality for the organisation. The WBL course gives the skills that add to the capability and capacity of the candidates who are already motivated to do their job better.

The organisation (denoted within a rounded rectangle) consists of resources, including people with the ability to form networks, and equipment that needs maintenance, has a core business/purpose. The organisation operates within its culture, but needs to link with both suppliers and clients through its networks. Stakeholders (top left) decide the strategic vision of the organisation to determine the balance of how the culture will operate in contributing to the long term stability (and possible growth) of the organisation and the rewards for the stakeholders. This is a simplified model of very complex interactions. It is not a smooth linear process, however, the model shows that the strategic vision of the organisation needs to move through the culture of the organisation to achieve the sustainability (and possible growth) of the organisation, for the benefit of the stakeholders.

**Figure 4.35: The impact of WBL on the organisation**

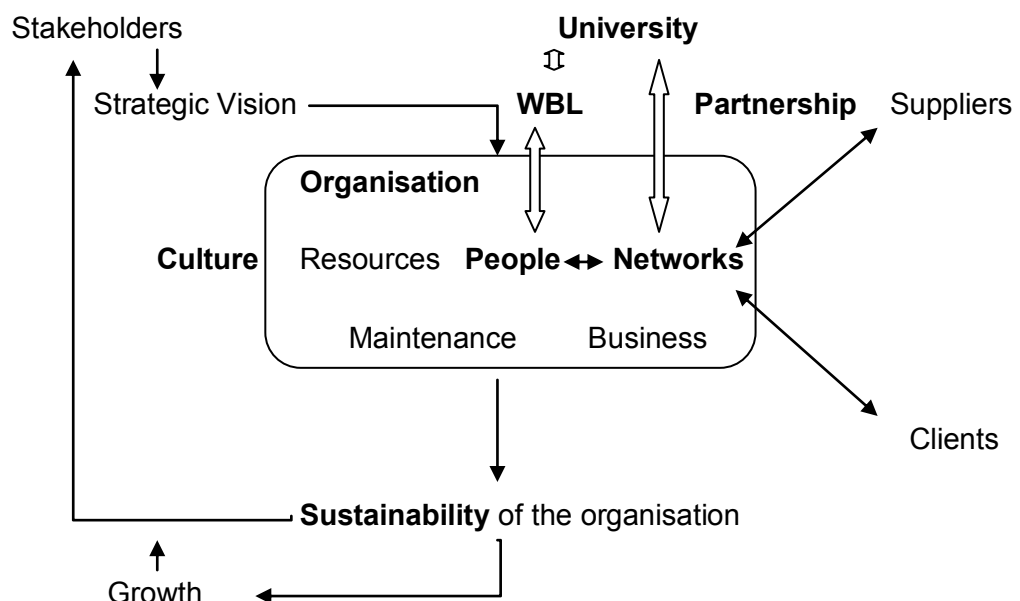


Figure 4.35 shows how networks from within the organisation (whether A or B) interact with networks from the University to form a partnership to provide a WBL programme for some people within the organisation. The WBL programme impacts the candidates, and through them impacts the organisation's culture, networks and sustainability (from candidates' own perspectives). As these are part of the flow of the model, if these are impacted then potentially other parts within the model will also be impacted.

## 4.21 Other related interview matters

### 4.21.1 Issues from the interviews

Some candidates who are not office-based thought part of the course was not particularly relevant to their current job because there were few areas that they could influence, but could see its relevance if they were promoted to the next level. One who had already been promoted thought that the company would benefit from increased professionalism and increased efficiency, but the real benefits may not appear for a couple of years when candidates were in more influential positions.

There were concerns that some 'Core Values' of the organisation were just words, and instead 'presenteeism' was practiced by some middle managers, with an unhealthy work-life balance that one candidate found unattractive and de-motivating in terms of wanting promotion. But the reaction: "Don't tell me how long you've been here; tell me what you've done." showed this candidate's potential to make a difference to the organisation as a middle management role model if promoted. The long, unproductive hours observed may be because of an implicit goal of 'being a hero' by working long hours to avoid the threat of seeming to be uncommitted, as described by Senge (2006:85) as a balancing process that maintains the status quo. If a 'presenteeism' manager understood this, changes may be made; perhaps this is a future, but potentially-challenging WBL candidate!

The days and timings of the programme were arranged to fit in with each organisation's work schedules, but some candidates found that their managers appeared to be inflexible about routines and deadlines.

*[O]ur team meetings are always planned on a Thursday, to coincide with the senior management meetings to get the issues into the system for the following week's meeting, so Thursdays tend to be quite difficult. It's not the best time in terms of how we plan our working week. In another sense it is quite difficult at times if you've got quite a lot of work on. It is a struggle to actually get there, especially with having to go all the way across [town] to the University to do that [A45].*

A change of routine away from the working environment was appreciated by some:

With it being a full day, in some ways it's good to get away from your working environment so that you can concentrate for that full day on the course that you are attending [A45].

One candidate found work time constraints difficult, but appreciated flexibility on the part of the University:

I enjoyed doing the course, and I enjoyed the work. I'm very constrained with the time.... I've been on call 7 days a week ... so time has been a problem. On the whole I've enjoyed it. Major frustrations have been not having enough time to do the assignments. Fitting them in around work and personal life - well, mainly work. ... I've let them know that I just couldn't get it done in time, and they've been good about it [B52].

#### **4.21.2 Comments on the course**

More input on basic skills at the beginning of the course was requested, especially for report writing. Basic guidance was insufficient for those who had not studied for many years:

In two days: the guidance for somebody who hasn't been to school for many, many years. It's all very well saying we can ring them up and ask, but it's the basic things. It's things like the report writing. More guidance on the basics! Maybe the first 2 days should be on how the assignments should be done. What is expected of us. ... If you don't get the basics right, the standard of the assignment is going to be down anyway [B52].

[S]omething we haven't done - is to do a couple of days of essay writing; report writing; writing in third person; referencing. We need two days doing that before we start. [B50]

This is confirmed by Smith and Scott (2011:31) who looked at post-graduate WBL in three universities and found that:

Students at all the universities raised a number of issues concerning learning support, categorized as lack of in-depth preparation prior to the course; a heavy dependence on the line manager to grant time to complete their courses; the variable quality of learning materials; a lack of clarity at the outset about intended aims and outcomes; no benchmark being available for the first piece of work; and a reliance on students to develop the skills necessary to survive the course.

Smith, Poppitt and Scott (2011:20) suggest:

Mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that students who fall within this category have access to a range of learning and study skills material and the required support to help them achieve their full potential on the Programme. This leads to an increased onus on academic staff to ensure that such support is easily accessible to ensure these student needs are satisfied.

Smith, Poppitt and Scott (2011:21-2) conclude that a step change in culture is needed:

In terms of supporting students on these programmes then a balance needs to be struck between offering comprehensive VLE support in addition to master classes and ongoing face to face support which is sometimes required early on in this type of programme. There are many examples across the sector of good practice in delivering work based learning programmes but a step change in culture is needed if work based learning is to be fully embraced as a fundamental part of what HE does.



Comments from current candidates included:

The modules are not difficult, but the essential readings are not always helpful and are difficult to read. There's a little bit of each one in most of the books. Feedback. And lecturers not talking to see the overall development - re writing [B50].

Recommendations for:

- improved book lists for those new to study;
- prompter feedback on assignments;
- an overview of progress on skills, such as academic writing which appear to be done on an individual module basis, without lecturers discussing the candidate's development from one module to the next;
- better monitoring of the continuity of the student's development

There was a feeling from some candidates that the feedback they had was too gentle. They wanted to know what was wrong and how to put it right.

They don't like to criticise people. We are adults and can take constructive criticism. Be as brutal as you like as long as you are constructive. But that's not been forthcoming with any assignments. We are doing this. We want to do it properly. We want to learn from it. [B44]

Most candidates expected more opportunities to meet with mentors, and some were not actually allocated specific mentors within the workplace. Facilitators of the courses were willing to discuss things with candidates, but from their point of view were expecting the candidates to initiate the meeting, whereas the candidates were waiting for contact from the facilitators. This needs clearer guidance.

Candidates' skills may need further extension, however, as discussed earlier, some may not realise that their thinking has changed.

Some of the sessions aren't too dissimilar from some of the one-day courses that the [organisation] do. ... because I'd already been involved in doing that, ... there wasn't really anything new that I learnt. [A45]

Emotional intelligence came out strongly as the most important and enjoyable parts of the course for many candidates:

Most of the people on the course would agree that there are some aspects, some sessions that we've got a great deal out of, in terms of learning new things, and I've got a great deal of understanding and knowledge [A45].

## 4.22 Chapter Summary

### 4.22.1 Case study outlines and analysis of data for A and B.

Chapter Four outlines the three case studies before analysing data for organisations A and B.

### 4.22.2 Executives' SSIs

An analysis of the executives' SSIs shows their underlying aims and objectives of the WBL programmes and their views of setting up the partnerships. These are summarised in section 4.7.

### 4.22.3 Candidates' questionnaires

The candidates' questionnaires provide a profile of candidates, and their opinions about the WBL programme's relevance to their work. This section is summarised in 4.12. Of particular importance in this section are:

- The candidates' motivations (section 4.9.5) and
- the candidates' values that are:
  - more closely aligned to the university than their own organisation;
  - attributed to the university as an organisation are:
    - reputation, knowledge and people.

### 4.22.4 Candidates' SSIs and their views of impact.

An analysis of the candidates' semi-structured interviews gives their rich, in-depth picture of the impact of the WBL programme.

- Current and previous public sector candidates' views of impacts are compared in section 4.16.
- Their combined views are summarised in section 4.17.
- The public organisation's details of the impact of WBL are given in Figure 4.29.
- The private sector's perspective on the impact of WBL is presented in section 4.19.
- Additional impacts, not already covered in the public sector, are detailed in Figure 4.31.
- Combined WBL impacts on both public and private sector organisations are summarised in section 4.20.

### 4.22.5 Significant summary of WBL impacts and models

Section 4.20's summary of the combined impacts on both public and private organisations is highly significant because it:

- a) identifies types of knowledge/concepts/values (nominally called M3 to M8 and 'Teg') mentioned in the interviews that are important in the next two chapters;

b) leads to important models:

- Figure 4.32 (which is derived from Figure 4.28) shows impact categories of
  - culture, networks and sustainability with sub-strands of
    - belonging, support and identity intertwined with
    - standards, experts and reputation;
- the transformational impact of WBL is shown in Figure 4.33;
- A model of executives' requirements showing the employees' main perceptions of the impacts of WBL on the organisation and its culture is shown in 4.34; and
- the impact on the organisation is shown in Figure 4.35.

These models are important because they pave the way to the development of the extremely important Courtyard Model which combines the impact categories, their substrands and the concepts assigned as M3 to M8 and 'Teg'. The Courtyard Model will be outlined in the next chapter.

#### **4.22.6 Additional comments**

Other comments related to the programmes were noted before this final summary. Some of these will be relevant to future policy.

#### **4.22.7 Case study C**

Perspectives of people working at the University will be considered in Chapter Five to allow comparisons with and responses to the needs of the partner organisations that unfold from this chapter.

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## 5 Chapter Five: Data Collection and Analysis: Case Study C

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### 5.1 Signposts

This chapter considers the partnership from the University perspective. It starts with an overview of the University's strategic vision that guides the organisation and positions WBL within it. This is followed by an outline of changes brought about by the SDF grant to facilitate WBL and employer engagement. The chapter continues with views of how the university is impacted. Staff involved in WBL in various roles including negotiation of partnerships, delivery of courses, administration, quality assurance, executives, centralised support and champions were asked about their perceptions of WBL. Semi-structured interviews at the university were mainly conducted during August and September, 2010 when few classes and meetings were scheduled. The University perspectives are viewed in the light of expectations of, and impacts upon, the external organisations, as considered in the previous chapter. The penultimate section of the chapter presents a new 'courtyard' model to explain the impact of WBL on organisations. The chapter concludes with a short summary.

### 5.2 The strategic vision of the University

According to an official document (2010) the strategic vision of the University is:

To achieve regional, national and international recognition as the UK's leading University for working with business and to be among the UK's top institutions of higher education in relation to:

- being a vibrant and effective learning community
- delivering excellence and enhancing academic and professional standards for both individuals and organisations
- contributing effectively to the economic, social and cultural success of the communities that we serve;
- and demonstrating a real and continuing commitment to social inclusion

[http://www.\[C\].ac.uk/docs/docrepo/Governor%20reports%20and%20financial%20statements/Governors%E2%80%99%20Report%20and%20Financial%20Statements%202009-10.pdf](http://www.[C].ac.uk/docs/docrepo/Governor%20reports%20and%20financial%20statements/Governors%E2%80%99%20Report%20and%20Financial%20Statements%202009-10.pdf) (Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2011).

With the region's transition from traditional industries to a knowledge-based economy, the University has a changing role.

This region... was built on natural resources ... If in the future it's going to be built on knowledge economy, then this University has to ... provide the knowledge resource ... to help them to do what they do better [C2].

Until relatively recently, the University had concentrated mainly on traditional teaching and on applied research, with HEFCE providing a significant part of funding.

The University is trying to diversify its sources of income having been until quite recently very heavily dependent upon mainstream HEFCE teaching funding... In times of difficulty any sensible organisation would seek to build additional income streams to diversify the risk [C17].

With the NE affected by declining demographics earlier and more severely than other regions, international student numbers, corporate programmes and WBL programmes become increasingly important. "In relative terms .... we will see ... a significant increase in our corporate programmes and Work Based Learning arena" [C17].

At the moment the projections, the growth in activity, can only come from short-term activity. Fundamentally there are fewer people of typical long-cycle age in the country and they are capped in terms of numbers, so this isn't going to go away [C20].

The University added a business solutions approach to its portfolio which included WBL.

By becoming a business-facing University we sought to go through a culture change to add a third element of activity to the former two: teaching; research. ... This University decided to be very proactive in seeking something which we've called business solutions approach, of which WBL is one element. ... WBL is one part of a portfolio of offerings. To that extent it is an implicit part of the University's mission, and we could not be a business-engaged University without offering WBL [C2].

### 5.3 Strategic Development Funding

The University gained a Strategic Development Fund grant from HEFCE to implement changes in infrastructure. This was to establish new posts to cater for employer-based students, and make employer engagement a one-stop service for businesses. The University adopted a hub-and-spoke model by providing a team as a central (hub) resource, with senior managers and business account managers in every school. The SDF was used to develop infrastructure, including additional staffing, a client relationship management (CRM) system (CRMS), and improved standards and processes to benefit the University as a whole.

We have our customer related software, which helps us to organise our relationships with industry in a much more structured way. We have account managers. We have developed a Customer First standard. We have had to look at our quality assurance processes to ensure that not only are they fit for purpose, but they are also leaner. We've had to look at registration processes. We've had to look at our finances. We've had to look at how we fund programmes, and draw on funding to deliver them. We've had to look at how we free up staff time to allow them to do that [C2].

This resulted in over sixty employers a year engaging with workforce development with a strong focus on accreditation of programmes. Partnerships produced 'multi-touch' relationships with repeat business for different needs. Research and Enterprise were

developed. Co-funded numbers increased significantly (1745FTEs and 6410 headcount over three years) with the University providing 15% of all HEFCE co-funded numbers.

Issues included difficulties in adapting internal processes; costing and pricing; and new processes for WBL. The removal of co-funding is a future challenge in the NE. Although the University is working to develop alternative models and non-accredited provision, it is clear from this research that candidates, who are vital to the success of partnerships, want WBL provision to be accredited, so it remains to be seen if this will be acceptable. Employer engagement may become more important than ever with high skill levels required for growth areas such as renewable energy, petrochemicals, and the digital industries. "Systems and processes are important; people make things happen" [C1].

## 5.4 Terminology

### 5.4.1 Confusing terminology

Terminology can be confusing. The University uses the term Business Engagement as part of its Business-Facing agenda, through which it offers Business Solutions to any problem that an employer may have. The use of jargon distracts from the relationship building and communication with an employer who requires an answer, and is not interested in learning the terminology. The University needs to speak the language of the business world by understanding the problem and providing the solution, rather than describing components that can be put together for a viable solution.

I actually try to talk about the solution that we are providing, rather than giving it labels. ... "So what you need is some way of helping the staff you've got in your export sales department to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding. Is that correct?" To which the answer is usually: "Yes, that's exactly what I've just said to you." What I don't say is: "We will construct a workforce development programme using a Work Based Learning Framework to provide you with the answers you are looking for." Because I think I would probably get: "That wasn't the question I asked you" [C17].

Business Engagement may include a range of options for the employer, but in terms of marketing, the emphasis is on consistency of approach so that the University is considered as a credible organisation with a good reputation linked to a marketing brand. This is where the University becomes closer to business in its use of marketing techniques.

It's the consistency of approach in covering all those areas of activity is fundamentally important to both University and clients as presenting us as a credible organisation that has the where-with-all and capability of working effectively with external organisations [C16].

There is confusion about work force development (wfd) and Work Based Learning (WBL). Generally, anything to do with delivering programmes for an employer would be under the

broader banner of wfd and could include Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), which would not come under the heading of WBL, as well as WBL itself. However, the student/candidate/employee is considered to be at the centre of the learning for WBL, so although the employer may have arranged, and paid for the learning, the University contract is with the learner for any WBL course or programme.

Wfd for me is delivering a programme for an employer. So the relationship is specifically with the employer to help them to develop, and enhance the skills and qualifications of the workforce for competitiveness and productivity etc. WBL could be taken under workforce development, or it could be taken by an individual.. I try to avoid terminology like wfd or WBL because of the differences in interpretation... I understand that WBL is a small part of business engagement [C16].

WBL is part of workforce development; workforce development is part of the three terms that tend to be used as synonyms: business solutions; employer engagement and business engagement, as shown in Figure 5.1 below.

**Figure 5.1 Terminology and the positioning of WBL**

Business Solutions / Employer Engagement / Business Engagement			
Wfd		Research	Consultancy
WBL	KTPs		

Terminology is a huge issue. It would be great to work in a transdisciplinary way, where we create new models of understanding, but I don't think we are at that stage yet. [C13]

#### 5.4.2 Acronyms

The compulsive use of acronyms to shorten long definitions may be helpful to those who understand the specialist jargon within the academics' world, but it can confuse, or exclude those who do not understand the terminology. The philosophy of WBL is right, but the communication of it is poor.

I actually don't like any of the terms that are used to describe this process at all. They are ugly terms designed by civil servants and educationalists, and they don't realise, I don't think, because if they did they would have done something about it: I don't think they realise what a turn off the terminology is to just about everybody else in the entire world. So I don't like any of those terms, and I try and avoid using them wherever possible [C17].

This shows the need for an awareness of good communications, especially when creating new relationships. It illustrates an important advantage of recruiting business account managers from industry so that they can talk to those in industry in language that can be understood, however, they also need to learn the language and ways of academia, which can easily be misinterpreted

## 5.5 The impact of WBL: University SSIs

The University has formal structures, including monitoring systems *via* designated committees or posts of responsibility, to ensure that processes and procedures are in place to move the complex organisation through its predominantly annual cycle. The well-established culture and a formal committee structure ensure effective networking, but also tend to maintain the *status quo*. Many of the infrastructure changes brought about by SDF have integrated into existing systems relatively easily. However, examples below include some areas that have been more problematic.

The impacts listed in Figure 5.2 below can, as with the other case studies, again be considered under the heading of culture, networking and sustainability, and still follow the pattern of the organisation's strategic vision being achieved with the help of networking and culture for the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

**Figure 5.2 Impacts on the HEI Organisation**

	<b>Culture</b>
29C)	WBL is impacting the University by becoming a more important part of its provision
30C)	WBL impacts university learning for students
32C)	The University is improving the way it deals with short cycle business
33C)	The University is undergoing a significant culture change that is still evolving
	<b>Networking</b>
31C)	The University is improving communications with employers
	<b>Sustainability</b>
34C)	WBL impacts the university by changing its culture, including networks, to increase its sustainability in a similar way to the other large organisations in this research

### 5.5.1 29C) WBL is impacting the university by becoming a more important part of its provision

The number of people taking WBL courses has increased significantly over the last three years because WBL is a key component of the University's Strategic Vision: to become the UK's leading business-facing university. The SDF grant is facilitating an increase in student numbers through targets and marketing; improving the infrastructure; and widening access.



This year we've been working with schools to deliver 850 FTEs of co-funded new student numbers. The co-funding element is a tricky one, because what we are talking about is getting the employer to pay half of the cost. It has been a massive exercise because it equates to about 4000 students. And next year there is an even higher target to reach [C16 (2010)].

The SDF grant was intended to influence the culture of the organisation to initiate significant change; additionally targets were set to ensure that the change would take place. "We've reached our targets, and it's largely down to the account managers that that has happened. So that has been a really successful element of the SDF" [C16].

SDF has funded development of new WBL programmes and accreditation opportunities which offer increased potential for off-campus learning.

We have to grow numbers in different ways. Obviously, the way to do that is to by investing in education that is outside the campus walls. There's a physical space environment issue there, but equally there is the opportunity to resource different potential student audiences and participants, who would have a very different experience to campus based [C13].

The potential number of people studying at the University is increased by providing a different learning experience. This contributes to the sustainability and possible growth of the University. However, a consequence of increasing numbers is that systems need to be streamlined to cope with the expansion and the different requirements of short courses for different types of learners. This is addressed by the SDF, but has caused some frustration. It is not always easy to find the right staff to teach courses when timetables and workloads are allocated for a year in advance. When new programmes are negotiated by a business account manager, discussions and formal handover to the academic programme manager could be facilitated by a very small academic WBL team that could build core courses or reuse parts of courses. This would potentially save time spent by each school in creating bespoke courses for employers when another school may have a near match that could easily be adapted, so saving time and costs; if already accredited, then there may be the potential for producing a new, accredited product quickly and inexpensively, that would meet the needs of the candidates as well as the employer. The business account manager would be able to move on with the next partnership, and the potential programme manager could be involved in shaping the new programme without major distraction from current commitments. There could be potential for members of the small academic WBL team to follow through with teaching some of the modules, or core courses, in a flexible hybrid role if required, and this would ensure that student feedback could be built into the provision.

### **5.5.2 30C) WBL impacts University learning for students**

WBL provides a different type of learning experience that is demand led: the employer and the candidate determine their needs, based upon their experience, instead of the

traditional model where the University as provider has dictated what is learned. As Tallantyre (2008b: 45) explains:

So that instead of the provider, it is the employer and the learner who are identifying needs. Instead of developing generic knowledge and skills, we can put those into our vocations.

WBL makes considerable use of people's experience and expertise through reflective learning to combine new knowledge with previous experience. It also focuses on aspects of work that may be innovative.

Students coming through the system are fit for purpose and fit for practice. We have evidence of staff introducing innovations, and making changes, and 'share and spread' that has made a difference. That also includes some of our more innovative courses that we've developed in partnership [C30].

By working in partnership the best of both the worlds of business and HE can be incorporated into the learning experience; this includes using appropriate pedagogies to cater for different learning styles and needs while the University could also learn from industry. Provision of WBL has resulted in opportunities for better: teaching/learning; assessment; two-way transfer of knowledge; work focus; support services; and facilities. These all have the potential to improve the learning experience for traditional students.

When we started with the SDF, we decided we would have external practitioners on approval panels, and now that is a taken for granted thing. It doesn't happen in a lot of other universities [C34].

The University is able to meet the needs of a different type of client. WBL can harness the motivation and experience of the learner to draw on what is known already, and to respond to authentic, relevant assignments from the learner's own work context. By applying new knowledge the candidate may influence the workplace. "Our learning and teaching assessment strategies are workforce-friendly, workforce-related, and ideally have an impact on the workforce or what the workforce does" [C30]. However, the relationship is a two-way process, so the University learns about the latest innovations in the workplace, and expands its network of contacts. Tallantyre (2008b: 45) summaries this:

We are not just creating new knowledge, we are transferring existing knowledge and that is mutual. You have heard that we are not just transferring knowledge into the workplace, but that we're transferring the knowledge back from the workplace into the university and that is a very fruitful relationship. It is not just work-relevant, it is work-focused.

A consequence of interacting with the business world is that traditional courses are more likely to become work-relevant, with advantages of up-to-date knowledge from the workplace helping new graduates when they seek employment.

If we become more aware of what the learning needs of that organisation are, we can perhaps address those, not only with WBL but with our under-graduates as well ... and with that we can prepare them to go out into practice [C2].

Although not necessarily directly relevant to the partnerships in this research, the University is impacted when self-employed graduates seeking niche contracts benefit from networking opportunities arising from employer engagement.

The impact of really meaningful employer engagement on our undergraduate programme and the opportunities we can provide for our students by developing those industry links is fantastic, and is central to why it's important that we do it [C23].

The University's reputation by association with leading organisations potentially increases future undergraduate student numbers in some schools, and some evidence for this is emerging.

Professionally, the relationship building has been fantastic. The PR value of that is enormous. Doing the [P] project, being a major provider in a regional [Q] project, hosting the [R] project: that has all come to us because of where we have placed ourselves in terms of industry engagement, and that has benefits in terms of our wfd offer, but huge benefits in terms of promoting and publicising the university to an undergraduate market; open days; so the added value has been phenomenal [C23].

Pedagogical approaches suitable for WBL candidates extends the pedagogical / andragogical repertoire for more traditional programmes by providing more engaging learning and more authentic assessment. "All sorts of benefits have come out of it in terms of a much broader picture of learning and teaching in pedagogical initiatives" [C23]. This requires an understanding of the significant differences between teaching and facilitating learning. "The aims and the outcomes are integrated within the learning and teaching strategies, and the assessments are related to and draw from the actual work the employee is set" [C30].

People who have not studied for over twenty years may require initial support services which, if available to all, could offer a wider range of support for traditional students. Online advice supporting all students is already part of many electronic resources available with twenty-four hour access; and the Library has extended opening hours and also runs short courses supporting essential skills such as referencing. Reluctance to use facilities, whether through lack of skills, equipment or confidence, may be overcome by encouragement, reassurance and help, which may require an individual approach. A heightened awareness of this may help to improve services which could benefit all students and may enhance retention. Most WBL students are adults in full-time employment and expect car parking and cafe facilities when attending classes beyond the normal working day, which, if available may also benefit staff and traditional students, although costs would be a consideration. Some services do not operate beyond business hours and conventional undergraduate terms which ignores the significant number of part-time students.

### **5.5.3 31C) The University is improving communications with employers**

The University has implemented a customer resource management system (CRMS) to centralise and record communications with employers. This strategy is underpinned by UKCES (2008) advice to simplify the complexity of HEIs by “hiding the wiring” to avoid confusion for employers and “rewiring the circuit board” by providing a much more employment-responsive system. The SDF grant has funded the CRMS, together with staff training and support, to offer employers a single point of contact at the University. The employer’s key University contact investigates the employer’s needs and produces the appropriate solution by ‘hiding the wiring’ (UKCES, 2008) without the employer having to learn the University’s systems, or by ‘rewiring the circuit board’ (UKCES, 2008) when bespoke provision is offered. Partnerships develop by meeting employers’ needs, for course provision, but also as a genuine, long-term mutually-beneficial partnership. A CRMS, if used properly, can be an effective way of integrating many contacts and managing them appropriately, to everyone’s advantage, as the University provides networking opportunities for organisations, and is central to a number of Communities of Practice. Using the CRMS to pass enquiries to the appropriate person helps schools to maximise existing networks, to work co-operatively, and to avoid duplicating efforts while having the ability to send relevant information to the appropriate person in multiple groups, quickly, saving time and costs of sending everything to everyone.

The Customer Resource Management system, has been in place for about 2 years now, and has 300 active users in the University. We will be using that to develop a professional approach to working with employers to make sure we have good systems for capturing our interactions with employers and managing them internally so that we are sharing information across the University, working together across schools and departments, for the good of employers rather than keeping all the information to ourselves [C16 (2010)].

As the centralised system also manages all externally funded contracts, it is relatively straightforward to produce data for official returns. However, this also means that safeguards are required, including compliance with Data Protection Legislation and Privacy and Electronic Communication Regulations. The University manages confidentiality issues by training and licensing users who need access to the systems data. The University’s Business Engagement Strategy document declares:

All trained CRMS users hold licences that give access to the systems data. Use of this data is governed by a code of practice. While most CRMS data is intended to be shared, some can be kept confidential, for example, complaints, intellectual property or other sensitive issues.

The system ensures accurate details through regular data cleansing, and produces an alert when others use the system so that the ‘nominated account manager’ is aware of all contacts with the organisation. It can build up a history of the relationship by tracking emails; future tasks and appointments can be tracked, and set up in advance with a reminder system: a client enquiry can be managed from project planning to delivery.

The system needs to be fit for purpose and easy to use to provide appropriate and accurate information within the University.

We are working for example very closely with CLQE to make sure the processes we have in place for supporting wfd are slick, and useable and again actually actively help academic staff to get involved rather than to present them with a huge range of bureaucratic procedures that become over-facing [C16].

The CRMS avoids confusion and time wasted on unnecessary explanations. A key person has the oversight of all engagement with the organisation as the initial point of contact. Anyone else involved is kept informed *via* the system. Organisations, *via* a named person, receive only relevant specifically-targeted information, including appropriate networking opportunities. The key contact, known and trusted by the organisation's executives, can be relied upon to respond quickly to questions; but if unavailable the CRMS can redirect calls to the most suitable person.

It's only when we all are aware of what activities are taking place in partnerships can we then direct an enquirer about one issue to another area where the University can probably offer much greater support, thus benefitting the workplace, and of course, the University [C15].

The system may be an excellent resource but a single mistake could have considerable repercussions, so its usefulness depends on people using it consistently, accurately and wisely. Too many people accessing it will increase likelihood of error but restricted use prevents information flowing. A centralised data base is important. However, people appreciate the personal touch, as is shown by the importance of networking, belonging and identity, highlighted by responses from candidates in organisations A and B. Computer-generated invitations do not convey added value, and may even be counter-productive in maintaining relationships. The biggest disadvantage of the CRMS is that people communicate in person, or through networks, rather than through 'systems', and without elaborate checking systems in place, data may not be recorded. Training and maintenance may take more time and effort than is saved by the CRMS, if it is not used properly.

Business Account Managers are boundary spanners (Child and Heavens, 2001) who speak the language of the business world. They have been inducted into the academic world, and supported by academics with considerable wfd experience. Each Business Account Manager is the relationship builder, maintainer and boundary spanner as the main point of contact for a number of partnership organisations. The CRMS is effectively a formal 'backup' system for a small part of the information that the account manager holds.

#### **5.5.4 32C) The University is improving the way it deals with short cycle business.**

Traditional teaching in universities is long-cycle business focused on students studying for 2 to 4 years. This does not fit with the needs of employers who need rapid responses to adapt to their changing requirements with short-cycle activities.

Any university has over history worked on long-cycle business. ... A key growth area, a key desire from the market, is to develop flexible short-course learning ... so any short-cycle business has to be fitted in around long-cycle business. ... At the moment there is a huge disjoint between the ... people who want to engage in that and the systems and structures ... to allow us to do that [C20].

The adjustment of systems and processes to accommodate short-cycle programmes is more complicated than simply fitting approval meetings into a shorter time-frame; it also requires a change of mindset. The University used SDF to embed changes in the organisational culture to facilitate growth:

Because we wanted to embed it, we recognised that we were going to make some massive changes in the University, none of which were going to be affected overnight because of culture changes [C16].

Time issues appear to be the stumbling block. Employers want fast responses to their needs: "If you work in the private sector you know that a week is a very long time for a response" [C17]. However, from a University perspective, the main issues about time are generally related to reputation.

The priority is to minimise risk for the Uni. I'm supposed to be the conduit in that that makes sure that we tick all the boxes, but we also make sure that something doesn't come back to bite us. We can have innovations but we have to make sure that they are well thought through so that reputational damage is avoided at all cost, and that reputational enhancement is built instead. That is the priority from the institute point of view [C13].

Contracts for students and short-cycle course quality assurance procedures have been changed to make them more user-friendly, without putting the University at risk.

Employers may need just a short course to address an immediate problem, but, as the partnership is long-term, carrying some credit towards a qualification may be beneficial for everyone. Employers in both case studies A and B considered it important to have accredited qualifications as part of investing in their people, and organisation B mentioned the reduced risks of compensation claims related to accidents. The candidates in this research put gaining a qualification in their top five motivations for studying. However, it takes longer to approve an accredited short course than a non-accredited course.

Universities are geared to annual cycles often with committee meetings scheduled for the year, so knowledge of key dates can help in scheduling deadlines for accreditation documentation or assignment submission for faster turnaround, but a nominated person may be able to grant approval subject to ratification at the next meeting, in the case of an urgent request. Processes are being simplified and streamlined but some misunderstandings are highlighted by the quality assurance system: "...because of the way that quality has been perceived, it's more akin to the document police in other people's minds" [C13]. However, the University's reputation is dependent upon upholding standards, and this requires a certain amount of scrutiny to ensure that standards are rigorously maintained.

Businesses have the pressures of time, whereas the quality assurance system has a focus on the student experience. There are tensions between the two views, but each wants a positive outcome.

Those strictures are in place to support the learner experience as well as the business. ... they want to get somewhere quickly, so they want to bypass the narrative discussion because they implicitly know that this will be a good thing [C13].

It's easier to blame the quality system than the partnership. The work is not in getting through the quality system; the work is in agreeing terms with the partner. There's the business modelling that has to be got right [C34].

Another way of speeding up the process is to consider accreditation of general credit. "I've been involved ... around pushing a smoother process around general credit ...that is under-utilised, and could be a very good model for opening up new opportunities." [C13]. Shorter timescales, possibly by using the WBS Framework (see p.27) or pre-approved module components, or course shells (Workman, 2011:111-2) could go some way to responding to employer needs but expectations for turnaround times would still need to be managed realistically. This is where a small specialist WBL team (see page 198) would help in the transition from an employer's concept to an accredited programme ready for delivery, while freeing time for the business account manager to do the essential work of communicating by boundary spanning and managing expectations. Such a team could also help with extending and embedding WBL across the University, in the way that Workman (2011:111-2) describes using empty shell WBL project modules to "facilitate colleagues in making the transition from traditional teaching approaches to using alternative WBL approaches".

The University is changing the way it deals with this different type of business and the resultant streamlining can also improve traditional procedures, but people are reluctant to change their approaches to tasks. A change of culture to embrace improved systems and processes will contribute to the sustainability of the organisation with quicker and easier to use systems that are more responsive to change, fit for purpose and will maintain robust standards without risking reputation. "It's the fuzzy culture shift and transformational change for everybody really" [C13].

#### **5.5.5 33C) The University is undergoing a significant culture change that is still evolving.**

People are becoming aware of the importance of WBL to the University and of the different ways of doing things that are arising from this. One academic said:

Previously I didn't see it as a core strategic drive within the University. ... WBL is a core strategic imperative with a role within the community and the wider HE sector. ...Employer engagement is at the very heart of what [University C] is.

According to responses to case study C's SSIs for people involved with WBL, the University is considered to be learning all the time, and is responsive to changes, and this is attributed to its strategic emphasis. University C is considered to have a major presence and role within the sub-region and to have "more ears to the ground than other organisations". The change in culture has been strategically led at all levels within the institution, and the additional SDF grant has improved infrastructure to help to implement these changes.

There is a 'hub-and-spoke' model with the Department for Academic Enterprise (DAE) as a central department supporting all business facing engagement, including work force development (wfd) and WBL within the University. The entire business-facing strategy needs support of staff, so leadership has been devolved to schools, with Deans still having the academic freedom and sovereignty of their discipline. Staff development opportunities have been available at an individual level, providing opportunity for development at grass-roots level. Although this has widely distributed ownership of change, the complex web of responsibilities are difficult to comprehend, even for some who are actively involved with WBL, so most people not directly involved are confused about where the lead is coming from.

Essentially, as employer engagement is part of the strategic vision, the lead comes from the top, from the VC, and is championed by a DVC. Support comes from the DAE, led by a Director. Each school's operation is determined by its Dean, with a designated Assistant Dean having a brief for employer engagement as part of their role, and with a Business Account Manager as the main point of contact for negotiating with organisations. However, some organisations have 'multi-touch' relationships with the University requiring contact with different schools. For this reason, the CRMS holds information, and Business Account Managers all operate from the central support department, the DAE, where they have weekly meetings to share information, strategies and decisions about how multi-touch relationships are best handled for a consistent, one-stop service for customers. The Business School, which also has an Assistant Dean of Corporate Programmes, has changed the traditional structure of undergraduate and postgraduate divisions to positions covering long-cycle and short-cycle programmes. This school also co-ordinates Work Based Studies programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with core modules delivered by the Business School, and non-core modules available from any school appropriate for the candidate's needs. These structural complexities together with difficulties of terminology discussed above (p.194) make WBL, wfd and employer engagement difficult to comprehend; some people are reluctant to become involved in something they do not understand.

There are a lot of people with a lot of experience, because they are the few who are used a lot, but not everyone gets employer engagement, nor wants to get it. It brings into play what you think a university should be about [C13].



For some, the association of anything to do with employment is related to the tradition of vocational education and low-level training, rather than high-level education. However, there are also examples of success, where seeing the advantages of engaging with industry has motivated staff to become involved:

Staff have seen these projects with big national companies or with regional companies, and they have wanted to be part of it. So, it has energised people... because they feel their practice is enriched: and they up-skill and update [C30].

Additional support structures and networks include an Education and WBL Research Group that leads to research-informed-practice and links with other research groups and centres within the University. Networking opportunities are encouraged by providing lunch before wfd meetings where presentations, discussions and seminars focus on WBL. The University's strategic policy documentation for 2009-12 includes WBL as one of its seven priorities, so it was added to agendas of key pan-university committees, and included as part of the fifth Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2009-2012), with integrity of coverage monitored by a new short-term committee

[http://www.\[C\].ac.uk/docs/DocRepo/Freedom%20of%20information/LTAS%202009-2012.pdf](http://www.[C].ac.uk/docs/DocRepo/Freedom%20of%20information/LTAS%202009-2012.pdf) [Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2011].

ICT systems are improving as technology evolves. Blackboard (the online e- learning system) includes help videos and daily emails alerting students to new information postings. Students can search the Module Catalogue: helpful for individualised WBS programmes. Library services are excellent with extensive on-line resources, late-opening library buildings, and supportive expertise. Additional staff members cover various administrative roles, although adjustments will be needed: "More and more over time we will be migrating towards the different needs of corporate clients, whether that's from the point of view of academics or our administrative staff" [C17].

Some people are initially reluctant to step into the unknown world of WBL but once the step is taken many find it enjoyable. One staff member new to WBL was surprised to find:

I enjoyed it! ... I felt I was helping to make a difference: ... an immediacy... two way communications and immediate application; people at work and immediate feedback; and it made a difference.

Changes in staff attitudes include an acceptance of dealing with external partners and welcoming new skills to benefit traditional students.

Most staff are not frightened of being externally facing: it's a taken for granted thing. I think people at all levels have got more skilled at dealing with external partners, which is an excellent thing, because all our students will have to deal with external partners soon [C34].

Different ways of working and thinking, and reciprocity where one informs the other, were appreciated, as were people's endeavours to provide: organisation-specific learning; good teamwork; mutual support and goodwill. There is also a sense of pride: "We made it happen!"

There are difficulties: HEFCE's definition of non-completion means that if students do not attempt assessments the University does not get paid; candidates' needs are more apparent and their responsibilities high; they initially lack confidence and need more reassurance; sometimes computer skills are basic. These factors can contribute to longer hours of staff input with little recognition for additional efforts given to encourage students' successes. Staff may be asked to do more as new programmes start during the year, so balancing workloads may become an issue. There is not yet a clear and obvious career path, although each school has partial responsibility for WBL at Assistant Dean level. Much of the work is 'invisible' because it may not even be on campus.

Most people I talk to are quite surprised at the level of activity that is taking place. WBL, for us by and large is an offsite activity, not exclusively, so you don't even see them [C17].

WBL is often combined within a normal workload that includes regular commitments in addition to the different WBL demands. Combining evening classes and traditional morning committee meetings can make a long working day, especially if flexibility is required for workplace visits. These issues need addressing to maintain the enthusiasm and the 'can do' attitude of staff. The University has a surprisingly large number of people actively involved in WBL, as shown by the participation of over 40 delegates from the University in a national WBL conference held in the NE in 2010.

#### **5.5.6 34C) WBL impacts the University by changing its culture, including networks, to increase its sustainability in a similar way to the other large organisations in this research.**

The impacts discussed above indicate changes in culture, including additional networks. The additional impact upon sustainability comes from diversifying income by providing WBL programmes.

The University's planned strategic vision responds to the needs of the region and its changing demographics to maximise the sustainability of the University as a large organisation. This has been supported and driven by the SDF grant which has been instrumental in funding infrastructure, including additional staff, as a way of changing the culture. The University has maximised its opportunities for survival and potential growth by concentrating on its strengths through a well-thought-out strategic vision based upon knowledge of its clientele (Lee: 2008). Grants follow strengths, and the SDF grant has developed infrastructure and a positive reputation for the future.

The culture of the organisation has changed, and continues to evolve. The learning from employer engagement is moving into the traditional provision of the University, to the advantage of all students. Systems are becoming more flexible and streamlined. Accreditation gives an additional dimension to potential growth, with case study A as an example of University accredited employer provision.

The single point of contact for employers increases business efficiency, but it also reduces some of the opportunities for exchange of knowledge in terms of networking, however, this can be compensated for by ensuring that networks are extended through other means, such as conference attendance, and the CRMS is an ideal medium for facilitating such meetings. It may be useful for account managers to have understudies for the long term sustainability of the organisation. It is important that the key contact ensures that effective introductions are made, and also that the CRMS is used to maximise networking within the University, as well as externally with other organisations. Opportunities should be created for people to cross boundaries so that more knowledge is exchanged.

The opportunity to cross fertilize between organisations is something that brings an additional level of value to the learning, because otherwise you have a group of people who all think in the same way because they all work for the same organisation, and you are not testing the boundaries of the level of thinking there [C20].

Within the University, contacts for WBL networks can be located through job titles and committee structures, although systems appear to be dependent upon some prior knowledge, including surnames. Intranet publication of committee minutes and listings of various groups and committees are starting a more equitable flow of information, but with contacts spread across all schools, named photographs (for intranet use) may facilitate networking. The Observatory, a web-based repository of information related to wfd, is helpful, if people look for it. A monthly email reminder with a hyperlink now accompanies information about scheduled wfd meetings, and an RS feed may be the next improvement to alert staff to new content. However, these sources tend to be used by those already familiar with WBL, and the challenge will be to engage others.

The culture of the University is: 'can do', and has become more accepting of change. The reciprocal learning between the University and its partners brings the academic world and the business world closer together as boundaries are spanned. The University is intentionally trying to become more business-like, and has an obvious commitment to the sub-region that unites it with its partners.

In terms of sustainability the University has more business and better infrastructure for the future. Employer engagement is considered by some interviewees as a business opportunity to take the University forward as a business, although this was usually given a rider explaining it as an opportunity to give back to the community, or that it was a two-

way relationship, with many comments about it opening access to HE for people so increasing prospects for their families, and the region for the future.

We are here to support the region, and it really does contribute to that. We've got hundreds and hundreds of people who have done these courses who are out there in our community with high level skills. It's important [C34].

The self-determination of learning, social mobility and economic prosperity were mentioned as key features of WBL, along with an idyllic feature of having: "borderless meadows without gates or gatekeepers" which expresses the unlimited, unconstrained potential that WBL can present, if used imaginatively. The University's growth in WBL provision was summed up as being a struggle at Master's level while forgetting that most universities do not yet have the degree.

We are very advanced with it compared to other institutions, and we do have a quite high level of competence in our employer engagement relationships. ... We are learning as we are going along so we feel as though we are still stumbling through. It's like we've got the degree already, but we are now doing the Masters. When there are anxieties we forget that actually we've got the degree, and this is just us struggling with the next level. Many places don't have the degree. Things we do every day we take for granted, but most universities haven't even started at that level yet [C anon.].

## 5.6 The impacts of WBL on the University

The impacts of WBL on the University are shown in Figure 5.3 and are discussed below.

### 5.6.1 Culture

The impacts on the University's culture make WBL a much more important component of its provision, with widespread ownership across the University, and a central support from DAE. This retains each School's autonomy while the University becomes more business-like with its improved systems and Business Account Managers who act as boundary spanners as the University learns from industry. There is increased staff support as more flexible systems open up possibilities for new areas of learning, creating new knowledge, and transferring knowledge to a wider range of people with more open access, opportunities for off-campus learning, and increased student support. The range of programmes has been extended, and assessment has become more authentic, with significant benefits of these on-going changes for the traditional post-school students as well, as the University realigns to a dual course cycle to cater with both long and short cycles of study.

**Figure 5.3 Impacts of WBL on the University**

Culture	Networking	Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•WBL a more important part of University provision</li> <li>•Wide ownership of employer engagement at all levels</li> <li>•Hub-and-spoke model with DAE as central support</li> <li>•Retains School autonomy</li> <li>•Business Account Managers as boundary spanners</li> <li>•More business-like</li> <li>•Improved systems</li> <li>•More flexibility</li> <li>•Learning from industry</li> <li>•New areas of learning</li> <li>•Creating new knowledge</li> <li>•Transferring knowledge</li> <li>•Increased staff support</li> <li>•Wider range of pedagogical skills</li> <li>•Wider access</li> <li>•Off-campus learning</li> <li>•Increased student support</li> <li>•Larger range of programmes</li> <li>•Authentic assessment</li> <li>•Dual cycle course systems</li> <li>•Significant ongoing changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Single point of contact with employers (more efficient business, but less networking opportunities)</li> <li>•CRMS facilitates new networks</li> <li>•Improving communications with employers</li> <li>•Committee structures</li> <li>•Staff development activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•New infrastructure</li> <li>•More reliable service</li> <li>•Improved administration and management strategies</li> <li>•Robust but easier to use QA systems</li> <li>•Different learning experiences available</li> <li>•Increased student numbers</li> <li>•Potentially longer student relationships</li> <li>•Long-term organisational relationships</li> <li>•Growing positive reputation</li> </ul>

### 5.6.2 Networks

The University's networks change as the CRM system makes more efficient use of its contacts through improved use of technology that targets markets more selectively, but emphasise the need for key people to maintain personal contact. Staff development activities and committee structures open up new possibilities for M2 learning within the University across the traditional divisions of Schools and disciplines.

### 5.6.3 Sustainability

The new infrastructure funded through HEFCE's SDF results in a more reliable service as improved management and administration strategies introduce more robust, but easier to use quality assurance systems that enhance the reputation, and hence the sustainability

of the University. The different learning experiences open up new markets with potentially greater numbers of students who may belong to the University for a much longer period of time, together with long-term partnerships with organisations within the region that are likely to be of benefit to the economy of the region, with mutual enhancement of reputations. The repetition of patterns in terms of scale and time is characteristic of fractals.

#### **5.6.4 Fractals**

The impact on the individual, the individual's job and the organisation appear to repeat for each of the case studies. This potentially increases reputation and sustainability not only for the organisations, but also for the region.

### **5.7 Courtyard Model**

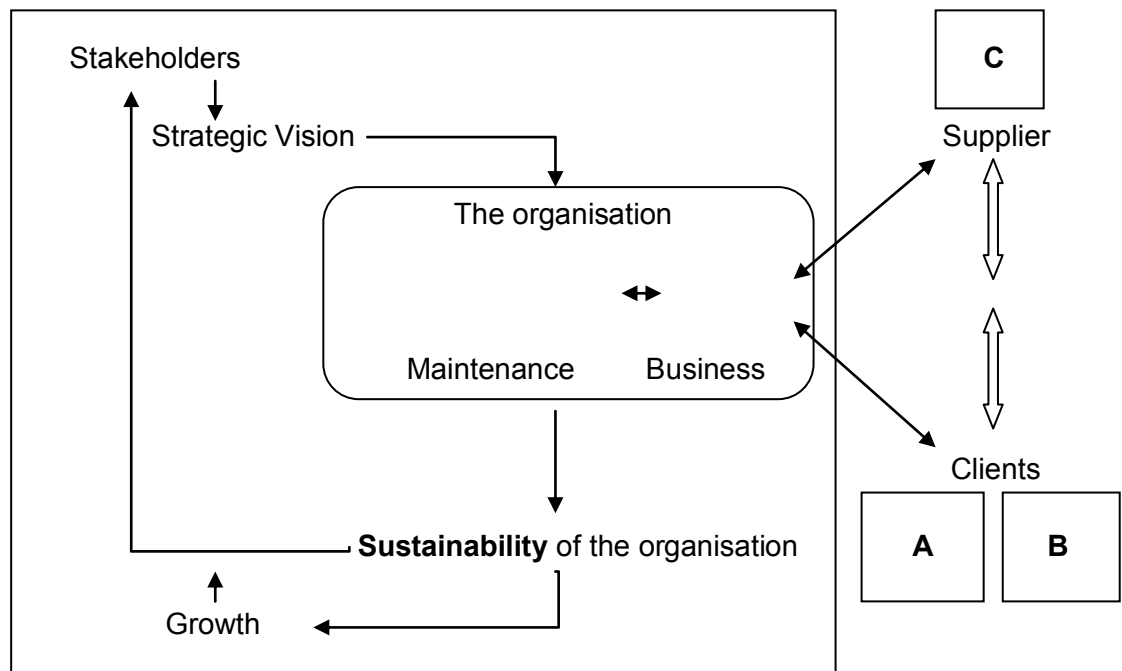
This research has shown that the impacts of WBL on each of the organisations help them towards their strategic vision that contributes to the sustainability of the organisation, with networks providing support, accessing expertise and adding to changes in culture. Each organisation operates with a similar pattern of its strategic vision moving through the culture (including the networks) of the organisation to maintain or grow its sustainability; and each organisation is dependent upon its clients.

In terms of Work Based Learning, the University is the supplier, and organisations A and B are clients. In each case, whether as supplier or client, WBL enters the organisation through networks, and the impacts of WBL are carried through the culture of the organisation to become part of its strategic vision cycle that contributes towards the organisation's sustainability. The process is highly complex but the organisational systems for absorbing the impacts of WBL are similar for all three organisations (as in Figure 5.4).

This fits with the notion of fractals discussed earlier in section 3.7: Fractal Concept Analysis. According to Wasserman, Clair and Wilson (2009:363-366) fractal patterns (Mandelbrot, 1982) were first discovered in cotton prices, "which were thought to be chaotic", but "actually repeat a similar pattern across multiple levels of scale" (p.363). They illustrate that "fractals hold the promise for systemised observation without sacrificing complexity p. 364) and state that "Fractals have the capacity to incorporate multiple styles of logic organised into generators" (p.365).

Each organisation has the features shown in the large rectangle, including its external supplier and client (shown to the right). In the way of fractal patterns, these features are repeated. This is shown where (taking the example of WBL as the product/service, and the University as the supplier, with B or C as the client) each of the organisations is represented on the right, by a small rectangle labelled A, B or C, which each has the features of the large rectangle.

**Figure 5.4: Model of organisations' interconnected roles showing the impacts of WBL on the organisations**



All three organisations are involved in partnerships, and the impacts of WBL enter each organisation (*via* a form of networking) through the partnership. This is a form of fractal patterning where each organisation has a similar model with its own strategic vision, culture and networks. The partnership is a special relationship that goes far beyond a financial transaction with mutual interests in the success of the region, but it is useful to see that the organisations operate in a similar way, and that cultural changes and networks are an important part of implementing each strategic vision to ensure that the organisation remains sustainable: the partnership is part of that network.

In terms of ROI, candidates from organisations A and B have cited examples of immediate financial benefit. Instances of maintaining the high reputation of the organisations, innumerable improvements in efficiency, and the re-energised, highly motivated staff are other benefits that would be difficult to determine in financial terms. Some candidates are keen to continue their studies, which again will be of benefit to their organisation, and also to HE.

The analysis of the research data has resulted in a model (Figure 5.5) explaining how WBL has achieved such a transformative impact on the organisation, based upon questionnaire and SSI responses.

First, it is important to understand that candidates ranked, time, knowledge, reputation, money and people as attributed characteristics of organisations from perspectives of their own work, and each type of organisation.

The final result (Figure 4.24 p.148) showed that:

### The University's attributed values which prioritise

- Reputation
- Knowledge and
- People
- are most like candidates' own values

**From Figure: 4.32**

## WBL impacts culture, networks and sustainability

**Knowledge (M1 and M2) is the concern of WBL**

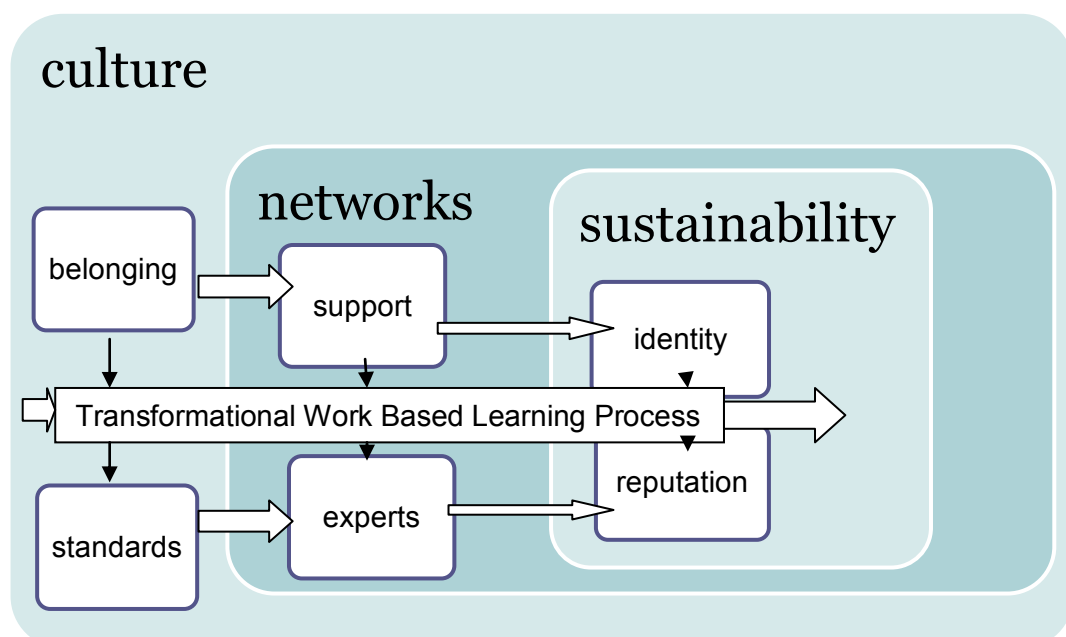
## People transmit culture through networks

## Reputation is important for sustainability

**This shows that the values candidates attribute to the university, and that are most like their own values, are relevant to the impacts of**

**This relates to Figure 4.33**

**Figure 5.5: The transformational impacts of the WBL process on culture, networks and sustainability**





- **WBL is concerned with M1 and M2 knowledge.**
- **Culture is transmitted by people through networks (of people);**
- **Sustainability of an organisation is based upon reputation and is dependent upon**
  - **standards: both enacted and judged by people,**
  - **and integrity: values held by people**

Consider the intertwining substrands that weave through the culture, networks and sustainability, because will be important for the Courtyard Model that follows.

The standards lead to the expertise of experts which are linked with reputation.

This is derived from the original Figure 4.28, shown below as Figure 5.6

**Figure 5.6 Culture, networking and sustainability sub-groupings**

<b>Organisation</b> →	<b>Nurturing phase</b> →	<b>Transition phase</b> →	<b>Participating in an evolving culture</b> →
<b>Culture</b> →	belonging at an emotional level	transition of growth	evolving maturity which is itself undergoing constant change
<b>Networking</b> →	initial supportive role	phase that extends trust and credibility	accessing high level expertise
<b>Sustainability</b> →	a developing identity	mentoring and gaining experience through liberating flexibility to try out new roles	an established reputation
<b>Individual within new manager/leader role</b> →	Belonging, sharing, identity →	Growth and development of trust and credibility →	Expert with established reputation →

Taking each of the three original categories together (reading horizontally) there is an initial nurturing phase of belonging / sharing / identity for each candidate as they are initiated into their new role as manager /leader, then there is a transition phase of growing where they develop trust and credibility through mentoring, before moving into the third phase of participating in an evolving culture with access to high level expertise and the establishment of reputation. These impacts could be considered as phases in development for the manager, as well as impacts on the development of the culture, networking and sustainability of the organisation itself, because the culture of the organisation is transmitted by people.

On a personal level, the employee needs to feel a sense of belonging, and the networks provide support for this, which leads to a sense of identity.

Referring back to Figure 5.5. the two substrands are interwoven, so by belonging to the culture of the organisation the employee/candidate adopts its standards. Through the transformational WBL process the employee/candidate improves these standards and tests out ideas with the support of the WBL network, which also gives access to experts while the candidate also develops more expertise to eventually become an expert. This gives the employee a sense of identity and increasing reputation.

However, the fractals give another way of looking at this repeating pattern, from the perspective of the organisation. If the organisation has a belonging culture (where workers feel that they are supported and valued enough to join a WBL programme, then the standards of the organisation will also grow through the programme's transformational effects, and the organisation will increase its expertise and consequently its reputation which will gain (or reinforce) its identity within the market place, which in turn will increase its sustainability.

This will all been illustrated in the Courtyard Model below. However, although the thesis started with M1 and M2 knowledge, other types of knowledge/skills have been mentioned.

Figure 5.7 below is important for the following courtyard model and it also features again in the final chapter. The different types of knowledge acknowledge some of the complexities involved in the learning encountered in this research for the purpose of the courtyard model, Figure 5.8 which follows.

**Figure 5.7 Different types of knowledge acknowledged in the learning process**

M1	Know that (propositional knowledge)
M2	Know how
M3	Know who
M4	Emotional intelligence
M5	Reflection
M6	Meta-cognition (thinking how to think)
M7	Motivations / drivers (explicit)
M8	Feelings / emotions / belonging
Teg	Values such as integrity / truth

These different Modes are discussed below and are given nominal M-numbers. Apart from M1 and M2, the other Mode numbers are not in common usage.

Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge (Gibbons *et al*, 1994) have been discussed earlier. However, Eraut (1994:14-15), when talking about an alternative approach to categorising the knowledge base of a professional, and needing to remember higher education's "strong interest in the 'sale' and 'production' of knowledge, sheds further light on M1 and M2 knowledge by saying:

Many of these important epistemological issues have only recently begun to attract widespread attention among those engaged in professional education.

The first such issue can be crudely expressed in terms of the distinction between propositional knowledge which underpins or enables professional action and practical know-how which is inherent in the action itself and cannot be separated from it (for example knowing how to swim or to play a musical instrument).

Eraut (1994:15) acknowledges that there are different ways of looking at professional knowledge that go beyond M1 and M2:

This distinction has been articulated in several different ways, which are not epistemologically equivalent. ... Here we simply need to note the increasing acceptance that important aspects of professional competence and expertise cannot be represented in propositional form and embedded in a publically but represent different perspectives on a problem that has yet to be fully clarified.

It is suggested that there is also 'know who' knowledge, perhaps referred to as M3, giving access to expertise through networks. Additionally there are two other types of knowledge, or skills included in these WBL programmes: emotional intelligence, referred to here as M4 and reflection which will be called M5.

Goleman (1997:xiv-xv) introduces emotional intelligence:

The seminal theory that connects the emotions to intelligence was put forward by Yale Psychologist Peter Salovey.... and his colleague John D. Mayer ... Their model is an elegant summation of what it is to be intelligent about one's emotional life and relationships.

Mayer and Salovey (1997:5) give their slightly abbreviated, preferred definition of emotional intelligence as:

..the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to effectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Reflection, which will be called M5 in the model below, is described by Gray *et al* (2004:114-5):

A great deal of learning also happens in the process of thinking about how a particular aspect of a job, project, incident or situation was dealt with – whether it went well, where it did not go well, where it could have been improved... It is in the process of reflection that we recognise what we have learnt in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding... It involves thinking about, and critically analysing, our actions, with the goal of improving our professional practice.

Schön (1987) identified two types of reflection: reflection-on-action, a 'cognitive *post-mortem*', which, through using creative imagination considers potential alternatives and

their implications, before arriving at a modified approach as a future strategy for a similar situation; and reflection-in-action, or 'thinking on your feet'.

Meta-cognition: 'thinking how to think', is called M6 here; and candidates' drivers or motivations, are called M7. Metacognition and metacognitive processes used in reading are discussed by Greeno, Pearson and Schoenfeld, (1999:145):

To become strategic is to move from an automatic to a deliberate level of analysis and action. Readers use a wide range of repair strategies once they recognise a comprehension or communication failure: they predict, ask questions, reread, sound out words, ... to solve problems as they read and write.

In the process of monitoring/evaluating comprehension or composition and allocating resources to improve communication, they come to understand themselves as learners. They learn their particular profile of strengths; they know what they can do automatically and what they must place under deliberate control.

Candidates' motivations or drivers, (called M7) were analysed from their questionnaire responses in section 4.11 above.

Underlying emotions, such as the need to belong, will be called M8, and essential values, such as integrity, will be called 'Teg'. The underlying emotions, M8, include the need to belong, as discussed with regards to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs in sections 2.8.4 and 2.8.5. It also includes emotions such as empathy.

True empathy – the ability to feel concern for a person based on how you would feel in his circumstances-requires advanced level emotional development ...Understanding another's experience is even more complex across cultures, requiring understanding cultural differences and values" (Ellison,2001:134).

'Teg', the starting point for the model, is concerned with values such as integrity and truth.

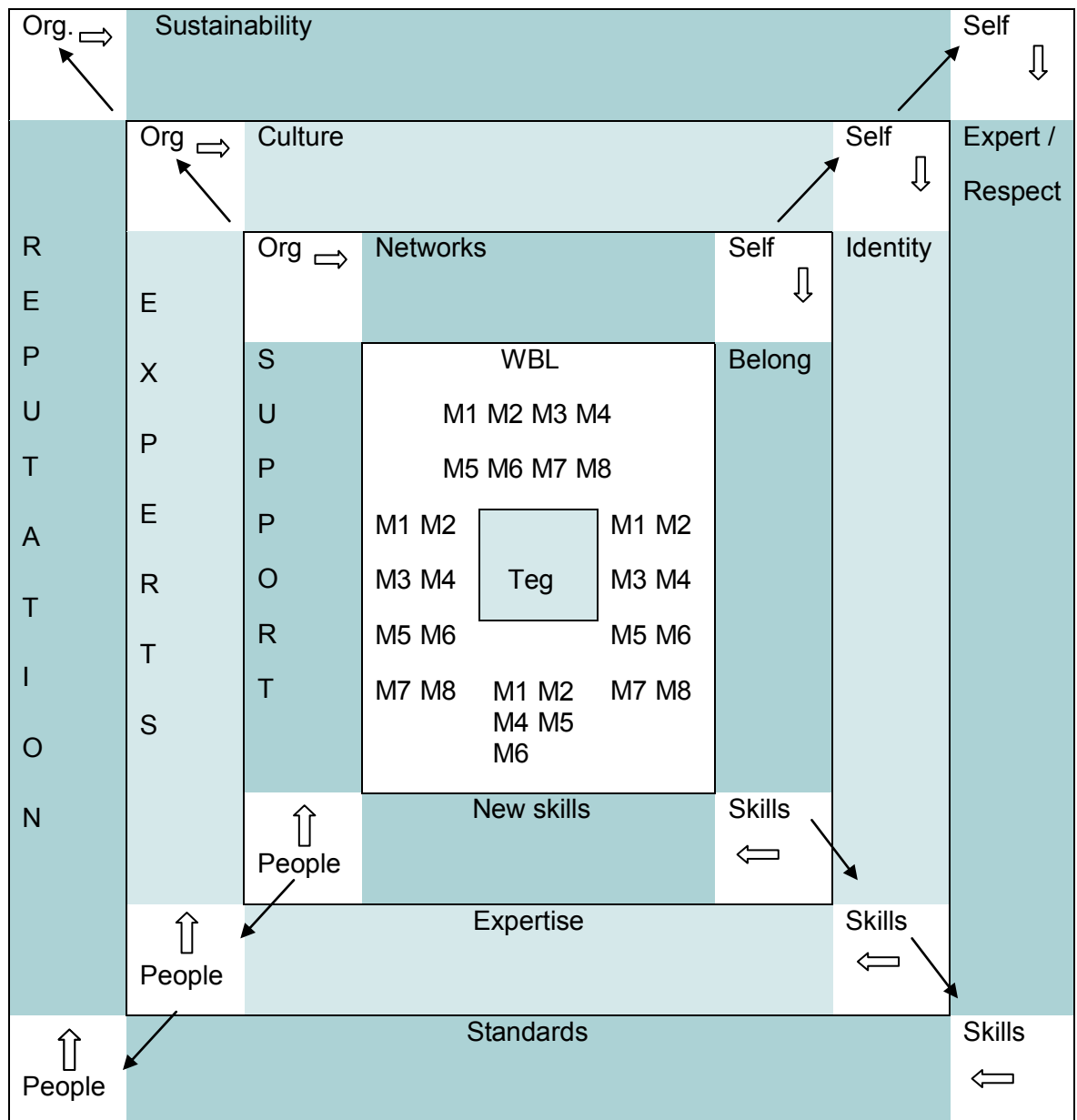
Barnett (2008:198-9), talking about professionalism in an age of supercomplexity explains:

In the old days, professionals could content themselves that they were value-driven. They started with a value position – around service, disinterestedness, a concern with truthfulness and integrity – and built their professional practise on that value base. The actions and their intentions, only gained sense in that value-laden context. What ought to be done set a tight frame around what was done. Professional life was securely and assuredly an ethical set of practices...However much it may seem as if the old has been vanquished...it lives on...not especially visible...it recedes into the background, practising its craft quietly and discreetly.

Figure 5.8 shows how WBL has such a transformative effect on both individuals and organisations by starting with values such as integrity (Teg) at the centre. Surrounding this is knowledge associated with the WBL programme, some of which is brought by the candidates' experiences. The series of concentric rectangles (courtyards) are meaningful because they link the organisation (Org., shown at the top of the diagram), clockwise to self (shown on the right hand side), skills (shown at the bottom) and people (shown on the left).

**Figure 5.8: The Courtyard Model of WBL**

WBL impacts on candidates and organisations in terms of reputation, knowledge, people, networks, culture and sustainability)



Starting at the centre (Teg), move clockwise through the courtyard showing WBL knowledge surrounding Teg. Move upper left, into the next courtyard to Org. and the white clockwise arrow, showing that organisations have networks enabling the self/individual to belong; and new skills to be practiced, with support from people.

Moving outwards (upper left) the organisation's culture enables the individual to find their new role identity linked to their growing expertise, mentored by people who are experts within the supportive culture of the organisation.

In the outer courtyard, the organisation's sustainability is linked with the individual's respect as an expert, based on standards and reputation. As the candidate progresses

through each courtyard, there is significant growth, but this personal growth and learning is also growth and learning for the organisation. Thin black arrows represent the growth of self, of skills, of people, and of the organisation.

This thesis is about WBL which uses M2 knowledge concerned with the practicalities of 'how to' best use 'how to' knowledge in three large organisations from various insider-perspectives. Mode 1 knowledge and Mode 2 knowledge are interlinked as are Science and Technology, where new advances in one tend to accompany advances in the other (e.g. microbiology was dependent upon the technology of sufficiently powerful microscopes). There is no reason to assume that theoretical knowledge will arrive before practical application. It may be documented more often, because those 'who do', do not necessarily write about doing; whereas those who theorise are expected to write in the traditionally-accepted peer review of the academic world. People who work with something may have a much deeper understanding of some intricacies of a problem than do those who know much theory, but have little experience of applying it. Working with something can give an intuitive 'feel' that may produce an excellent solution. Chance favours the prepared mind, even when some knowledge that has prepared the mind is implicit. When that knowledge is made explicit it may be articulated and shared, so increasing probability. HEI/ employer engagement both prepares the mind and provides opportunities for articulating the implicit: creating innovations that may provide solutions that we do not yet know we will need; or new applications of knowledge. Developing direct links between WBL candidates and innovation centres in universities that embrace employer engagement partnerships may create future innovations from praxis. One academic noted: "We need a commercial arm. We need to support and commercialise what they do." Opportunities exist, but networking and personal introductions may be required to encourage their uptake by WBL candidates: "Essentially social justice relates to the principle that every effort should be made to ensure that individuals and groups all enjoy fair access to rewards" (Furlong and Cartmel, 2009:3).

## 5.8 A new HEI / employer engagement model

Bolden *et al* (2010: 52) present two models of HEI that incorporate employer engagement. Their earlier model represents employer engagement as a third leg of University provision, by an additional, small circle touching a larger circle that represents Teaching and Research. Their research findings indicated that, with the exception of CPD and workforce development, which fitted the original model, employer engagement was in fact more central:

A number of similarities and differences were identified between this and earlier research on the topic and a call presented for a more systemic perspective in which EE is regarded as a core and integral part of the education and research missions of HE rather than as a 'third leg' or additional activity.

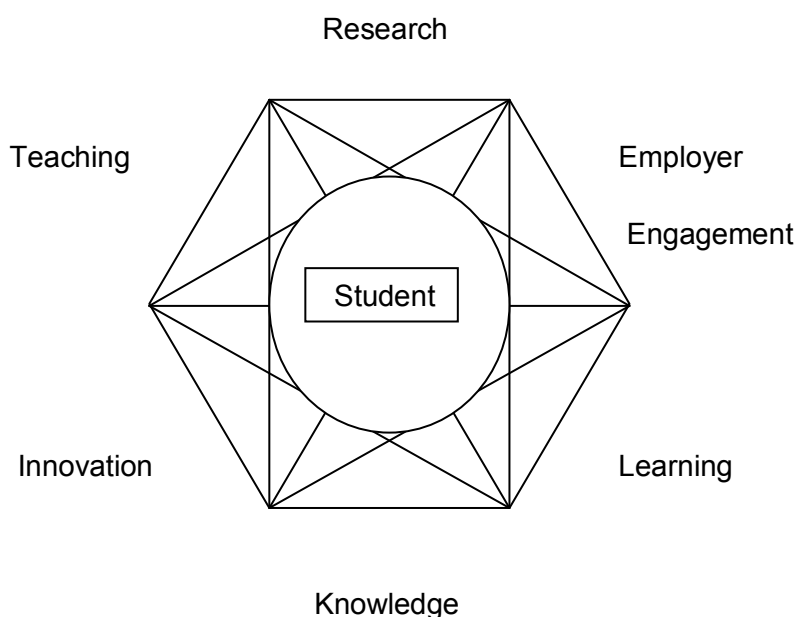
With employer engagement linked to core teaching and research their model became a triangle.

[W]e represented the core missions of HE on a triangle, with teaching as one corner, research another, and business engagement the third ... with various HE offerings positioned at different places along these three axes and a virtuous cycle connecting all three of them.

The latter model is an improved representation of HEI/employer engagement as described by Bolden *et al*, however, from the results of this research University C requires a new model, Figure 5.9.

Universities have traditionally been regarded as having two fundamentally important main strands: teaching and research. However, from the evidence presented in semi-structured interviews this no longer represents the situation at University C.

**Figure 5.9: REELKITS model of an HEI incorporating Employer Engagement**



There has been a paradigm shift from teaching to learning for some people. This does not detract from the traditional format, but complements it. Teaching and Learning are interlinked, and for this reason, they are placed opposite each other, as different approaches to achieve similar results. The University focuses on knowledge, and research is about the discovery of new knowledge, so knowledge and research are placed opposite each other, with research next to teaching, for research-informed-teaching which may inspire innovation. Employer engagement provides opportunity for research within the workplace where the focus is on learning rather than teaching, so employer engagement nestles between research and learning. With new knowledge coming from

research, and with additional interactions with employers, innovation is likely to have an increasingly important role in universities as they work closely with businesses from all sectors to find new ways of creating applications for new (and older) knowledge. This places innovation opposite employer engagement. The model is a simplified form of the multifaceted nature of HEIs, and their complex inter-relationships and networks. Students are essential for the sustainability of universities, so they are put at the centre of the model. This fits the evidence; it also fits with current government policy.

## 5.9 Chapter Summary

### 5.9.1 The HE perspective

This chapter considered the partnership from the University perspective with views of:

- the University's strategic vision that:
  - guides the organisation;
  - positions WBL within it;
- changes brought about by the SDF grant to
  - facilitate WBL and employer engagement including:
    - a hub and spoke model with centralised resources;
    - Business Account Managers in every School;
    - a Business Solutions approach;
    - a Customer Resources Management System.

The impacts of WBL on the University are:

- from the perspectives of staff involved in WBL including partnership negotiators, course deliverers, administrator, quality assurance personnel, executives, centralised support and various WBL champions;
- discussed in section 5.6;
- summarised in Figure 5.3.

### 5.9.2 The Courtyard Model and its significance

Section 5.7 is possibly the most significant section of this thesis. Models from the previous chapter summarise findings about impacts of WBL on the partnership organisations.

It uses the concept of fractals where patterns are repeated, and starts by showing that each of the three case studies is based upon the same pattern, derived from the impact statements and executive needs of organisations A and B. The strategic vision of each organisation is passed into the culture of the organisation, through networks, which are used to contact suppliers and customers, to lead to the sustainability (and possible growth) of the organisation.



Each of the organisations can be a supplier or customer for other organisations. In the case of WBL the university is the supplier and organisations A and B are the customers. However, the modelling of each organisation is restricted to a simple rectangle, and the organisation's culture is represented within this rectangle by a smaller, rounded-cornered rectangle. This is modelled in Figure 5.4

Questionnaire results showed that the University, whose ranked attributes were Reputation, Knowledge and People, was the best fit of the three organisations in terms of upholding the candidates' personal values.. These values link to WBL (concerned with knowledge) and their impacts on the organisation: people network and the networks contribute to changes in culture, which leads to sustainability which is associated with reputation. Figure 5.5 (shown earlier as Figure 4.33) shows the transformative effect of WBL.

Case study responses originally derived from Figure 4.28 (shown here as Figure 5.6) and summarised in Figure 4.32 provide impact categories of:

- culture, networks and sustainability with sub-strands of
  - belonging, support and identity intertwined with
  - standards, experts and reputation.

Figure 5.6 is used to explain how impacts could be considered as phases in development for the manager, as well as impacts on the development of the culture, networking and sustainability of the organisation itself, because the culture of the organisation is transmitted by people.

Different types of knowledge/concepts/values (nominally called M3 to M8 and 'Teg') that were mentioned in the previous chapter are listed in Figure 5.7 and are given fuller explanations. It is important to keep these in mind because they are discussed again in the final chapter.

All of the impacts/knowledge/concepts/values that have been discussed in section 5.7 are incorporated into the new 'courtyard' model shown in Figure 5.7. This model is explained as a fractal extension of Figure 5.6 (originally 4.28) which relates the growth of the individual to the growth of the organisation as each passes through various developmental stages. It considers growth of self and skills through each of the 3 courtyards, as they contribute to development of people and the organisation, by using the different types of knowledge, centred on integrity and truth, through WBL that is at the core of the process.

### **5.9.3 HE/Employer engagement: a new model**

A model of HE incorporating Employer Engagement follows in section 5.8.

### **5.9.4 Chapter summary**

The chapter concludes with this short summary.

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## 6 Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

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### 6.1 Signposts

This chapter brings together the findings, conclusions and recommendation of this research. Impacts discussed earlier are summarised and SSM categories are tabled to highlight WBL's beneficial impacts for a variety of people within the organisations. A model and preparatory questions are presented for initial setting up of a new partnership to reduce executives' time commitments..A self-reflection section examines the methodology used for the research and its limitations. Recommendations are made for future research. Possible adjustments to improve WBL practice for the case studies, are given, as is a brief statement of ROI. This chapter concludes with policy implications of this research for modern HEIs before the final summary that includes the contributions that this research makes to the field of WBL.

### 6.2 Impacts

Questionnaire responses indicated that candidates felt that they had benefitted from the WBL programme, but this research is not a routine consideration of the outcomes of initial educational objectives: this research found impacts beyond these traditional measures. SSIs investigated how the individuals were better able to do their jobs, and how this then impacted the organisations involved. The conclusion is that WBL provides more than the immediate skills required by an organisation: it uses M2 knowledge to implement the organisation's strategic vision by developing people's capacity and capability to create and use networks to change the culture to enhance the sustainability of the organisation, and, potentially to promote sustainable growth. This contributes to the organisation's learning where new knowledge becomes embedded, where individuals develop personally and professionally while encouraging and supporting others to be better at their jobs.

The executives of the organisations wanted to achieve the strategic vision of their organisation for its stakeholders by improving employees' skills to ensure succession planning for the survival and possible growth of the organisation, through improved processes supported by and embedded within an organisational culture that promotes better communications, more efficient working and a strong valuing of people. The HE

WBL programmes have positive impacts on various people within each organisation. This is shown using SSM terminology in Figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1: WBL and SSM**

	<b>A / B (Organisations)</b>	<b>C (HEI)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Customers</b>	Stakeholders Executives Employees Customers  Suppliers Sub-region Region Nation	Stakeholders Executives Employees Customers: Candidates Traditional students Suppliers Sub-region Region Nation	Strategic vision Jobs Learning services/products Learning Learning Local economy Regional economy National economy Revenue
<b>Actors</b>	Executives/negotiators  Those involved in WBL Administrators	Executives/Business Account Managers Those involved in WBL Administrators	Partnerships Greater learning Job stability Improved systems
<b>Transition process</b>	In: WBL; out: learning and improvements in business, including sustainability.	In: WBL; out: learning and improvements in business, including sustainability.	Potential for innovation and growth. Culture changes
<b>World view</b>	M2 Knowledge is important; people are important and valued; reputation is important; ROI is important; change will happen.	M1 K is important to all; M2 Knowledge is important to some; people are important and valued; reputation is important; ROI is important; change will happen.	Opportunities for praxis-led innovation Universities become more like businesses, but need to maintain holistic educational overview of all students
<b>Owners (who could stop it happening)</b>	Everyone	Everyone involved with WBL in some way	Everyone stands to benefit but not everyone understands the potential.
<b>Environmental Constraints</b>	Sufficient income; Sufficient support to provide time, money and space for networking; Candidates' colleagues covering during study times: possible opportunity for 'liberating flexibility.'	Sufficient demand; Sufficient career opportunities to recruit the 'right' staff; Staff goodwill.	Flexibility is required to meet everyone's demands, but career structures <i>via WBL</i> will promote economic stability, sustainability and possible growth.

It is the (M2) 'how to' knowledge that guides the actions for achieving the aims of the organisation; that improves the organisation by valuing and investing in its people; that educates and mentors them to ensure the survival of the organisation by changing it for the better from within by using their new skills and M2 knowledge to improve processes, relationships and standards; that creates opportunities to change the organisation's culture by embedding these changes, to become the accepted norms of the organisation to make it more sustainable and more successful.

An organisation is made up of its assets (people and resource) which can be organised into systems which may be improved by becoming better (including adding value), faster and/or cheaper (Kotter 1995). Resources can be improved by changing the resources themselves, and/or changing processes that are used to manage the resources, and/or adding something that is of value to the client. Simple maintenance of expensive equipment resulting in short- or medium-term savings require effective processes in place for sufficient and timely maintenance, with flexibility to deal with unforeseen problems, or short-term savings may become long-term costs. Processes use procedures which may be explicit (and formalised into written policies) or they may be implicit (part of the informal culture of the organisation). People ensure that formal or informal procedures are used to conduct the business of the organisation. WBL enables people to use procedures strategically to operate processes and to manage people more effectively by developing appropriate skills and knowledge by building on experience.

The impact of WBL from an employer's perspective means that their employees can:

- Understand the bigger picture of the organisation including: its systems and structures; internal and external networks; how and why things operate; the interdependence of various components; the inputs and outputs, policies, procedures, ethics and culture of the organisation;
- Understand emotional intelligence to develop their own strengths and to understand others, to communicate better;
- Build networks with candidates from different parts of their organisation to cross internal boundaries easily; to extend their networks through introductions; to facilitate working more efficiently and cohesively;
- Use reflective thinking to make the implicit explicit, to review, critically appraise and risk-manage people and processes to make better-informed choices for more favourable outcomes;
- Use knowledge, extended capacity and capability, and experience built up through years of learning by doing within a community of practice, to embed improved procedures within the culture of the organisation; and to share these in easily retrievable formats, or through access to experts within the organisation through networking, as part of the collective knowledge of the organisation.

These employees' strengths help the organisation to fulfil its strategic mission through a culture which adds to the sustainability of the organisation by improving products or services for clients, whose payments cover the organisation's costs, with profits returned to the organisation (and stakeholders) for use in the next cycle of reviewing the strategic vision, which may include growth.

WBL implements Kotter's (1995) eight-stage strategy (outlined earlier on page 65). All three organisations experienced the first stage, a sense of urgency, due to the global economic crisis and rapid technological change, but also decided to up-skill their workers. Organisations A and B selected candidates for WBL programmes as future leaders and managers: they are the guiding coalition. Organisation C also formed a guiding coalition of people interested in, or delivering WBL. Each organisation has a strategic vision which includes WBL as a way of implementing its strategy by empowering the Guiding Coalition. Completion of the WBL programme generates a short-term win; implementing the resultant learning consolidates gains, and produces more changes; and because a network is formed around WBL, new approaches can be anchored in the culture that is transmitted through the network.

The employee has various motives for undertaking the WBL programme but the top five motives are to: be a better leader/manager; learn more; be able to do the job better; have experience validated; and to gain a qualification.

By investing in WBL the organisation gains the skills it requires, and also benefits from realising the employees' motivations, which are job-related. Additionally a number of employees also see impacts of WBL as:

- increasing loyalty within the organisation;
- feeling valued by being able to study through the support of their employer;
- belonging to a network, united by the educational experience and the workplace;
- increasing their self-esteem and confidence;
- opening up secondary networks that make the organisation more efficient.

Even candidates who were studying due to concerns about redundancy rather than for careers progression wanted to do their job to the best of their ability and show a return on investment by performing better. A large proportion of the candidates expressed interest in continuing with further study once the course was completed, and some former candidates are already pursuing this. These motivations all benefit the organisation by adding to its human capital. However, candidates also gain from the HE experience.

According to Siebert (2011:92-3):

Rooted in the ideas of European Enlightenment, the espoused mission of universities is to equip individuals with the tools of critical appraisal, evaluation and analysis. Consequently, it is reasonable to expect from them an approach to

workplace learning that differs significantly from corporate efforts.... work-based learning in higher education is intended to provide the worker/learner with the freedom and skills to appraise assumptions, integrate evidence, draw valid conclusions and challenge cognitive authorities, including corporate policies and the theories and assumptions they rely on.

Helyer (2011:103) posits:

The HE experience should be a holistic one, embracing the widely varying contexts in which knowledge is produced, gained, built upon and used and this stretches beyond academia to encompass work, social and community uses, adding value to the many facets of its students' lives as they become talented and trained individuals.

This enrichment was experienced by some candidates who realised that the programme enabled them to contribute to the succession planning of their organisation. There was a feeling of 'liberation' at being allowed a degree of autonomy, initiative and decision-making responsibilities in taking sideways steps to try out new areas. Those who had already reorganised sections were able to convey the positive impact of their efforts in terms of increased efficiencies, higher standards and increased morale. This was also the case where risk-management procedures were implemented successfully. A number of candidates appreciated being mentored through new opportunities (although some felt that they had received insufficient mentoring) and wanted to mentor others within their organisation, so strengthening relationships, and contributing to succession planning.

The above impacts improved relationships which contributed towards changing the organisation's culture. Learning about emotional intelligence was considered a key contributor to a change of mindset and more caring and understanding attitudes. A more cohesive culture was created by breaking down silos between different levels of the organisation, as well as between different divisions. Confident candidates had the capacity and capability to do what was required, with reinforcement from their support network. People were more energised and teams were more highly motivated and able to operate with more initiative. More confident candidates working in a more cohesive culture may experience greater feelings of well-being at work, which may also enrich aspects of their social and community lives.

One significant difference between case studies A and B in ways that learning moved into the organisations was that some public organisation candidates mentioned putting information into the intranet, which was central to the culture of their organisation; whereas there was no mention of this in the 'hands-on' environment of the private sector organisation. This may be related to the public sector candidates having more interfaces with people outside their organisation, so the culture required a consistency of approach, and regular use of computers for recordkeeping. Some private sector candidates were more orientated towards dealing with objects within a long-standing team situation, where use of computers was minimal, but mobile phones and face-to-face encounters were used frequently, with one interview interrupted approximately every two minutes by such

encounters. Candidates in both organisations expected future changes and used electronic equipment to advantage to move the learning through the organisation to change the culture: ‘the way we do things here’. Frequent opportunities for formal and informal face-to-face encounters, telephone calls and use of e-mail, were combined with highly structured systems within University C.

According to questionnaire responses the candidates are generally at least satisfied with the learning from the course that provided leadership and management skills and improved their confidence and capabilities, helped them do their jobs better, and gave them a qualification (two of the top five motivators). The impacts of the WBL programmes from the perspectives of candidates are summarised in Figure 6.2.

**Figure 6.2: Impacts of WBL programmes arranged through HEI / Employer Engagement partnerships in large organisations in NE England.**

Culture	Networking	Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•caring and valuing</li> <li>•supportive</li> <li>•increases feelings of loyalty</li> <li>•cohesive</li> <li>•safe environment</li> <li>•provides time and space</li> <li>•promotes creativity</li> <li>•promotes innovation</li> <li>•improves communication</li> <li>•encourages reliability</li> <li>•raises profiles</li> <li>•promotes efficiency</li> <li>•facillitates change</li> <li>•sparks interest in new areas of learning</li> <li>•leads to more learning</li> <li>•resolves challenges</li> <li>•improves team management</li> <li>•brings directors and employees closer</li> <li>•changes mindsets</li> <li>•further develops skills gained previously</li> <li>•may be unrecognised</li> <li>•may be latent</li> <li>•latent impacts may not appear until candidates are promoted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•develops relationships</li> <li>•facilitates introductions</li> <li>•shares knowledge</li> <li>•mproves efficiency</li> <li>•makes corporate knowledge more accessible</li> <li>•extends into Action Learning Sets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•reduces costs</li> <li>•accesses funding</li> <li>•enables successful funding bids</li> <li>•improves quality</li> <li>•provides liberating flexibility to try out new roles</li> <li>•enables restructuring</li> <li>•provides a more reliable service</li> <li>•improves management strategies</li> <li>•provides knowledge for succession management</li> <li>•awareness that coaching and mentoring could enhance management strategies started by WBL</li> <li>•could be appropriate for others within the organisation</li> </ul>

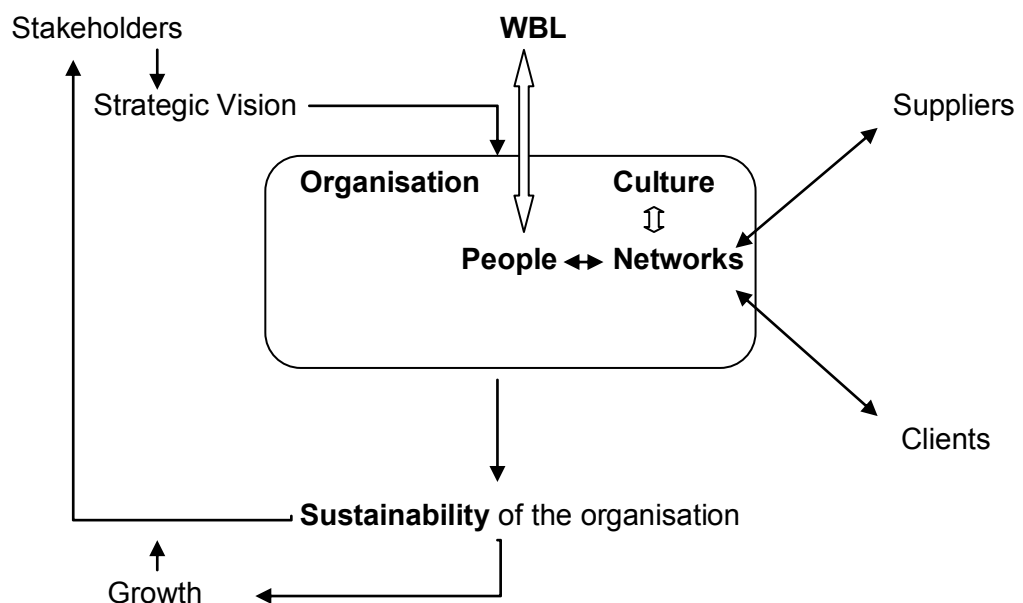
Impacts on each of the organisations help them towards their strategic vision that contributes to the sustainability of the organisation, with networks providing support, accessing expertise and adding to changes in culture. Each organisation operates with a

similar pattern of its strategic vision moving through the culture (including the networks) of the organisation to maintain or grow its sustainability; and each organisation is dependent upon its clients.

### 6.3 Setting up a new partnership

Setting up a new HEI / employer engagement partnership needs a similar approach to applying for a job, with initial research about the organisation and a consideration of income and expenditure before preparing a suitable application. If there is insufficient compatibility further time and energy spent on the project would be wasted. The following models (Figures 6.3 and 6.4) may reduce some of the time and cost spent in the preliminary engagement for organisations initiating a new partnership.

**Figure: 6.3 WBL achieves the strategic vision for sustainability through people who network and influence the culture**



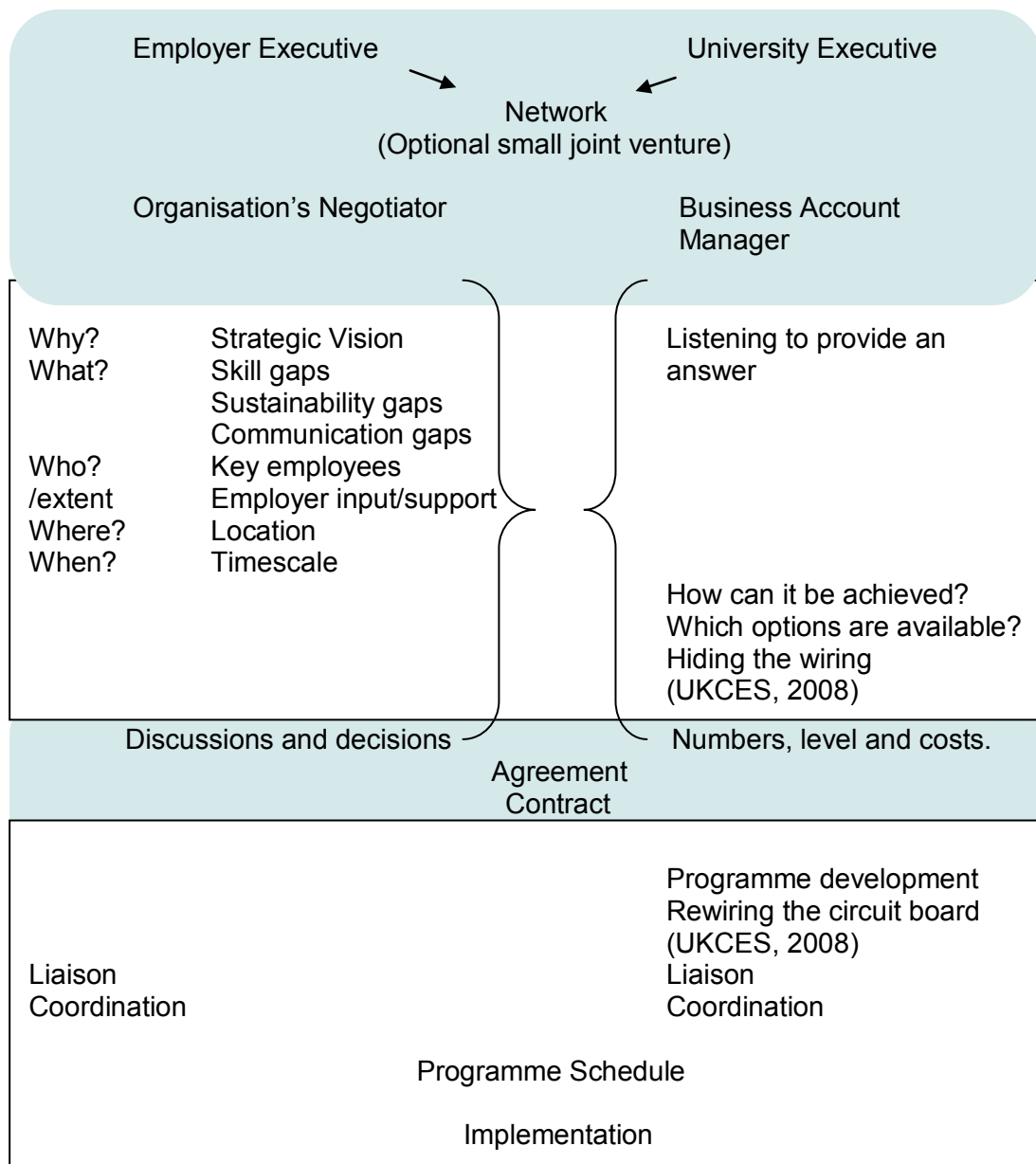
The networks formed by employees participating in WBL programmes have been instrumental in changing the culture of the organisation towards greater efficiency that increases the sustainability of the organisation in two large organisations working with the University, as shown in the model in figure 6.3.

The stakeholders' strategic vision is implemented by up-skilling people appropriately by using WBL arranged through the HE/employer engagement partnership. The strategic vision of an organisation becomes the WBL focus, so that the vision can be achieved. However, HE develops people who are capable of leading change, and the organisation's executives must be supportive of changes implemented from within by providing opportunities for networking beyond the confines of the WBL programme. Knowledge



Management will take the organisation forward, but if this is not part of the strategic vision, then the partnership is unlikely to be productive.

**Figure 6.4 New partnership model**



Relationships are about trust so established executive-level networks could be used to introduce key people. Negotiators need to invest time in building trust and good relationships with open, honest communications, perhaps through an optional small joint project; but after initial research and introductions meetings should be purposeful rather than time-consuming. Executive time is expensive when setting up a new partnership, but if the organisation's main negotiator is fully conversant with the organisation's requirements and strategic vision, and there is clarity about essential requirements and budgets, preliminary discussions may be made through the negotiator before potential solutions are presented to executives. The new partnership model (figure 6.4) shows that executive time can be limited to the activities shown in the shaded panels, with the

practical, day-to-day negotiations conducted by the negotiator and the University's Business Account Manager. The questions in the upper-left un-shaded panel would be answered by the organisation's negotiator before the University's Business Accounts Manager considers viable options, but would 'hide the wiring' (UKCES, 2008) of the University's systems before giving the organisation alternative solutions and their costs, dependent on numbers, for further discussion and potential 'rewiring the circuit board' (UKCES, 2008) in providing a bespoke programme.

**Figure 6.5 Preparatory questions for a new HE/Employer Engagement partnership**

Introductions	Who knows whom? Are there existing networks? Identify the right people Introduce the right people
Research	Find costs/budgets, expertise/needs, timescales/expectations (both organisations) What can you do for each other? What can you do together for others? Can external networks be extended?
Partnership	Are communications open and honest? How can trust be built for the long-term? How can expectations be managed? Is there a small, low-stake project to understand how each other works?
Strategic vision	What needs to be done to implement this? How can this be done better? Is this structure /process / product? How can this be improved?
People	Who are the key people to implement this? Do they have understudies? What additional skills would help them? Are different teams / departments involved?
Networks	Can key people network easily? Does this include understudies? What communications systems are used? How are new processes embedded within the organisation?
Culture	How supportive is the culture? Where are the silos or blockages? Who are the leaders in the improvement area(s)? How do the networks work?
Sustainability	Where will key people be in 2 and 5 years? Is there a progression route for understudies? Do understudies have mentors? Is new expertise needed?
Growth	Is growth feasible and if so, when? What improvements are needed for growth? Who are key people and replacements? What additional skills will they need?

Both organisations contemplating a new HE/Employer Engagement Partnership are likely to follow the model where strategic visions are implemented *via* networks and culture to contribute to each organisation's sustainability. Potential preliminary questions, figure 6.5, similar to a risk assessment, are useful for both organisations from the outset of the

partnership, before the negotiator and Business Account Manager consider course outlines for future re-involvement of Executives' in decision-making that prepares for formal contracts prior to full programme development. Considering employee/candidate motivations may be mutually beneficial if they coincide with those of the organisation.

### 6.3.1 Motivations for study

The top three motivations of all candidates surveyed in this research are: to be a better leader/manager; to learn more; and to be able to do their jobs better. The next are: to have their experience validated and to gain a qualification. They want their study to fit around work commitments; their qualification is preferably university accredited, but accreditation is important to them; they want time flexibility for their study.

### 6.3.2 The least important motivators

Candidates were not concerned about the course being affordable, but they were not paying for it. They were not motivated by wanting more money, nor were they interested in looking for another job. Although a few had opted for the course as an insurance policy in case of redundancy, 'concern about redundancy' was the next category of least motivation, followed by 'wanting to meet other people'.

**Figure 6.6: Candidates' most and least important motivations for study**

Ranking	Motivation
1 <sup>st</sup>	To be a better leader / manager
2 <sup>nd</sup>	To learn more
3 <sup>rd</sup>	To be able to do the job better
4 <sup>th</sup>	To have experience validated
5 <sup>th</sup>	To gain a qualification
14 <sup>th</sup>	Wanting to meet other people
15 <sup>th</sup>	Concern about redundancy
15 <sup>th</sup>	Applying for another job
17 <sup>th</sup>	Wanting more money
18 <sup>th</sup>	The course was affordable (but they were not paying)

When starting up a new HE/employer engagement partnership, it will be important to consider the potential candidates' motivations for study, because results shown above may be limited to the particular case studies used in this research.

## 6.4 Self-reflection on the methodology and its limitations

### 6.4.1 Objectives and outcomes

The initial objectives of the research were achieved within the allocated time span. It was a vast field to cover, but it was important to research WBL's impact from the viewpoint of all participants, including those in HE, to contextualise WBL from an academically-accepted research perspective. It is hoped that this research may lead to greater academic understanding of: WBL as a field of study; and the relevance of M2 knowledge (Gibbons *et al*, 1994) which still interacts with Mode 1, propositional knowledge, but the theory is approached from a different perspective.

### 6.4.2 Other modes of knowledge

Another outcome facilitated by the analysis was that other modes of knowledge have emerged naturally out of the data as being relevant to WBL and its pedagogies. The notion of 'Teg' (values including integrity and truth) along with M3 to M8 have long been an informal part of teaching/facilitating learning: most are mentioned by Eraut (1994) but there appears to be a paucity of sound research on these; other epistemologies; and approaches using a multiplicity of epistemologies.

Curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation are all linked to knowledge. If knowledge is viewed in new ways, then pedagogy may also be viewed differently, and new pedagogy may also be developed. According to Sadovik, (1995:9):

Curriculum and pedagogy are considered message systems, and with a third system, evaluation, they constitute the structure and processes of school knowledge, transmission and practice. As Bernstein (1971,1973:85) noted: "Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realisation of the knowledge on the part of the taught."

Epistemology, and hence pedagogy, appears to remain tightly linked to subject disciplines, so reflect the *status quo* of traditional university delivery. Formal recognition of various knowledge types that are not linked to subject disciplines may lead to new ways of thinking and to new pedagogies, since learning is framed by the knowledge upon which it is based. The use of different types of knowledge in WBL may be a useful starting place for such research, although this would depend upon both WBL and M2 knowledge being fully accepted by the academic community.

### 6.4.3 Strengths and limitations of the methodology

Observations of case study candidates were taken with a modified participant action research (PAR) approach where participation was intentionally limited. The approach was effective for observing the lived experience of the WBL sessions with the candidates, to appreciate their learning context and content. It was at times difficult to restrict

participation to just sufficient to be accepted within the group to avoid unintentional interventions causing immediate change. Observations provided new insights for the researcher into the learning experiences and ideography of the WBL candidates and had a strong influence on the content of the resultant questionnaire. Avoiding redundancy was included as a possible motivation for studying after observations. Class participation helped to build relationships which probably resulted in candid responses from candidates, and observations permitted access to informal times and spaces surrounding the formal sessions. A limitation was that although lecturers running the courses were aware of the researcher's role, they may have felt that their teaching sessions were being judged, and this may have changed the experience in some way.

The questionnaire was a useful and efficient way of profiling candidates and their motivations and provided information for the researcher to establish immediate rapport in the SSIs. The questionnaire also provided evidence and reassurance that WBL programmes were providing the expected up-skilling educational outcomes, so SSIs could concentrate on the additional benefits of the WBL experience. Reputation as a possible attribute for the various organisations came from the observation sessions, and was used in the courtyard model, so provides evidence supporting the relevance of observation sessions. Two candidates opted out of the research *via* the electronically-delivered questionnaire, and a third had computer difficulties, so the number of participants was lower than originally anticipated, but people were participating willingly. Another candidate with restricted access to computers was keen to complete the questionnaire as an extended interview session. A limitation of the questionnaire was the low number of participants, with different numbers in each group, so statistical data was presented as a banded system showing degrees of positive or negative responses where possible minimise this limitation. It was also useful for illustrating descriptive categories.

The SSIs worked well. The dual interviews were extremely helpful, both to the researcher and to the executives involved, with opportunities for clarifying meanings within a three-way relationship: sometimes for the researcher; sometimes for the other executive. For executives it was a time-saving, updating opportunity that in one case led to a decision being made within the interview to escalate the partnership, possibly because of reflection on the levels of trust that had built up between the organisation and the University.

The timescale available for research was used effectively, however, because of the late change of case studies, cyclical opportunities for reiteration to develop and test out some ideas was not an option. This was a limitation. However, the approach used was an adaptation of Action Research, using SSIs to follow-up the questionnaire which followed up observations, to provide an element of development and testing of ideas, as a way of minimising this limitation. The lack of cyclic reiteration was further compensated for by capturing WBL impacts after an extended period of time by observing former candidates

(AA) who were participating in self-initiated Action Learning Sets for case study A. Some of these former candidates also participated in the questionnaires and SSIs. This complicated the data analysis process, but was an indication of possible impact after a time delay although the two groups' experiences could not be compared directly, so may not have been as consistent as hoped, which was another limitation. However the additional data analysis was generally surprisingly consistent, and helped with triangulation of results.

Although transcribing the interviews was time-consuming, it helped with the grounded theory analysis of the data, and added context to each participant's story by highlighting what was important from their perspective. The categories of impact emerged directly from the words of the participants. Using OneNote as a repository for all transcriptions and notes facilitated sorting data into different case studies, and double-checking use of particular words across all respondents.

The use of fractal concept analysis was helpful in structuring the modified grounded theory data analysis. It was an adapted form without multiple opportunities for going back to clarify interpretation of data. The lack of iterative cycles was a limitation, if considered as true grounded theory, but the adapted data collection approach presented less likelihood of data contamination by the researcher. A technique adopted to check on accuracy and interpretation of SSI data was to summarise the main points at the end of the interview, with invitations before, during and after the summary for the interviewee to amend any misinterpretation while carefully noting body-language to double-check any points where the interviewee showed any physical reaction. The technique was also useful feedback for the interviewees.

Use of a MIC generator to structure the analysis was built into the structure of the SSIs which may perhaps have predetermined the focus of the responses, so may have been a limitation, however, the research was specifically about WBL for individuals in order to do their job better, and to see if this impacted the organisation. It is important to ask questions that will give the appropriate data. The MIC generator used the individual, their job and the organisation as its structure, and although this framework channelled answers it did not specify content, and it was the content that was used as the basis of the grounded analysis, using the framework as different levels of filtering.

In retrospect, the research was limited by omitting direct questions on the use of ICTs in connection with the learning moving into the organisation. During private sector observations some candidates mentioned struggling with using computers; and one public sector candidate revealed that no-one communicated through Blackboard, so use of ICTs was dismissed as a focus. It could have been investigated thoroughly, but with the rate of change of technology and its uptake, the use of ICTs in WBL has potential for being a

complete research project in its own right. This research was already wide ranging, so if ICTs had been a specific focus, other aspects may have been omitted.

This research is of value to the partner organisations, but a limitation is that it is not necessarily applicable to other situations. The case studies were selected to represent good examples of WBL programmes for organisations that had entered into HE/employer engagement partnerships based on HE case study C. The models derived from this research could make a useful starting point for future best case scenarios, if only to compare and contrast points of similarity or difference. However, the research has given rich descriptions of the impact of WBL on organisations which should enable others to measure it quantitatively. It is important to put forward a final word of caution in term of limitations of this research. Life is complex and it would be both unrealistic and difficult to prove that a programme of study is the only factor that is directly responsible for a particular outcome, because there are far too many variables. This is why this research has not evaluated the outcome, but has instead described impacts from the perspectives of those involved, and has attempted to bring together and make sense of those descriptions. From the perspective of the people involved, those who are best able to decide whether or not WBL has made a difference, WBL has had a significant impact on the candidates, their jobs and their organisations, as acknowledged by themselves and their employers. The researcher's own WBL, and shared experience with the candidates, is also key to interpreting the impact of this research.

## 6.5 Operational Implications for HE

### 6.5.1 HE/Employer Engagement partnerships take time to establish

Executives consider that partnerships are based on trust which builds slowly over time. Nurture initial relationships may help them to mature into long-term mutually-beneficial partnerships that are likely to make large contributions to the future of both organisations and their region.

Investing in these initial relationships is important at executive level, but once sufficient trust has been built, and there is agreement in principle for a partnership, a pricing range and requirements should be outlined before negotiations take place at a lower level and options could then be presented to executives for decision-making, to avoid delays and unnecessary expenses. Section 6.3 and Figure 6.7 may help in this process.

### 6.5.2 University time-frames could become more business-like

Universities traditionally operate on an annual cycle, whereas businesses work on a very short-term cycle, so a university could be considered more favourably by business executives if the university were to become more business-like with much shorter time-frames for workforce development activities.

### **6.5.3 Faster provision of bespoke programmes**

Businesses appreciate fast responses. One way of developing bespoke programmes quickly is to use a small development team that could assemble a package from pre-accredited modules, and 'empty shell' modules for negotiation, as part of a learning plan. The business account manager and the potential programme manager could help shape the new programme without major distraction from current commitments. Members of the small academic WBL team could deliver some modules in a flexible hybrid role if required, and would build student support and feedback into the provision.

### **6.5.4 Staffing of WBL Programmes**

WBL can take the university into the workplace. This means that some university staff may adopt a very different, unconventional role. WBL staff may work unconventional hours and attend meetings held at conventional times. There is still a perception that little is happening with WBL because staff may not be on campus during conventional working hours or have part-time contracts. The status and working hours of people involved in WBL should be monitored carefully, and a clear, progressive, career pathway should be identified.

### **6.5.5 A partnership contract for WBL should include the candidate**

Any learning contract should be between the university and the student. Although the details of WBL contracts are open to debate, HE programmes are primarily about the development of each student, and the institution's reputation stands upon this, so financial viability, while still relevant, is of secondary importance.

### **6.5.6 WBL programmes should be accredited, ideally as part of a continuum of qualifications**

Programme success is dependent upon the motivation of the individual student. This research has shown that WBL students want accredited qualifications. Organisations may wish to save on costs by using non-accredited courses, but progression paths to a range of accredited qualifications are likely to attract candidates who may become life-long learners, which could benefit both organisations if learning is sourced by the university. Repeat business and raised family aspirations may be worth far more in social and long-term economic benefits than a short-term price-cut attempting to increase numbers initially with non-accredited courses. Universities are about reputation, and the values attributed to universities are close to candidates' personal values. This offers potential for future development.

### **6.5.7 Good communications are necessary for promoting WBL**

Although using specific terminology is an essential part of academic disciplines, it is not necessary when communicating with businesses.



The use of Business Account Managers as boundary spanners has initially proved successful. It may be advantageous to research the effectiveness of maintaining long-term relationships while also initiating new partnerships, to find out how becoming part of a different culture changes the ability to span boundaries; the Mode 2 knowledge used in the role may help in the professional development of future Business Account Managers.

University C used a hub and spoke model for workforce development with a central support hub and schools maintaining their individual autonomy. Whatever model is used, it is important that good communication opportunities are available so that people can network (whether through formal committees or less formal occasions) to carry the strategic vision into the culture to increase the sustainability of the organisation. For this to be effective there need to be champions at the top of the organisation.

The CRMS system is an effective way of keeping and tracking information about key relationships with contact people within organisations. It is helpful to have such systems, but they are only useful if used efficiently, and although a means to efficient networking, they are not a substitute for networking. Security and confidentiality issues may limit their accessibility.

## 6.6 Future recommendations

### 6.6.1 For research:

The top five motivations for candidates include 'validation of experience'. Profiles of candidates from the private sector showed that a larger proportion than expected were within the 10 year pre-retirement age group for their industry. Although their organisation's history had a strong influence on this, there may be other causes for the anomaly. Many candidates also wanted to become mentors to others within their organisation. This leads to a hypothesis that older candidates take WBL courses because they want validation or recognition of their life's work experience, which may indicate that older people could become a significant part of future university markets. Their desire to study may be for themselves, others or for altruistic reasons. They may wish to become a mentor so that their knowledge is retained within the workplace. They may welcome the opportunity to join an expert advisory group. The older student phenomenon was also observed in Australia, at post-graduate level where 58% of WBL candidates in one university were over 50 at the start of their self-funded studies; reduced financial commitments may also be an influencing factor related to age.

Technology undoubtedly plays a role in both networking and transmitting the culture of the organisation. This aspect of the research was not fully explored due to the original scope of covering three large organisations in an already large research project, the fact that the link with culture was not apparent at the start of the research, and that one interviewee

was disappointed by the lack of use of technology for interacting with fellow candidates. Now that this research has established the impact of WBL on the culture of the organisation, there is scope for researching the role of technology in WBL networking and the transmission of culture, although given the rapid rate of change in technological development, it may require a short time-frame with a fast analysis, if it is to be of practical use.

The different modes of knowledge discussed in section 6.4.2 have been evident in WBL programmes. It would be useful to research these epistemologies used within the context of WBL in order to develop new pedagogies. Leach *et al*, (1999:vii) state:

Policy development and educational practice in a number of countries is being built around aspects of new understanding about the nature of mind; an acknowledgement that knowledge has long outgrown the traditional discipline categorisations of schools and universities and a realisation that learning and assessment is an essentially social process.

Although many of these types of knowledge were discussed by Eraut in 1994 the strong linking of epistemology with subject disciplines still dominates research and practice. Gibbons *et al* (1994:148) explain: “Disciplinary boundaries are the result of history, vested interest, financing, entrepreneurial opportunity or of academic coalitions”.

#### **6.6.2 For practical implementation within the case study organisations:**

Most candidates expected more opportunities with mentors. Some were not allocated specific mentors within their workplace. Course facilitators were open to discussions but expected candidates to initiate meetings; whereas candidates were waiting for contact from facilitators. This requires clearer communications of expectations from the outset.

Many candidates were interested in mentoring others. Mentoring is an aspect for future course development that would be easily adapted for many different employment sectors and has potential to contribute positively to the culture of an organisation, as well as being a highly desirable skill for employability. Mentoring should therefore be an optional, or core WBL module because it builds on reflective thinking and emotional intelligence while also using M2 knowledge that is an essential part of the workplace.

Better support of candidates, especially in academic techniques, was requested for the beginning of their academic studies, with individual monitoring of progress through a series of modules.

A small specialist WBL team within the University could help to speed up and reduce costs in developing bespoke programmes from core or shell courses to ease the transition between the business account manager and programme coordinator (pages 205 and 244).

### **6.6.3 For ROI**

This research has shown that WBL impacts large organisations significantly, in ways that go far beyond the up-skilling of employees and gives a considerable, but immeasurable ROI. WBL may contribute to knowledge management, and certainly improves efficiency and networking in both formal and informal ways related to the organisation's learning. A number of new models have been presented based upon the findings of this research to contribute to the growing knowledge base of WBL, which, as SSM (p 211) has shown can be of considerable benefit to those willing to prepare for change by becoming involved in WBL programmes and HE/Employer Engagement, in NE England.

Each case study organisation may wish to consider the impacts of WBL on their organisation as a starting point for reviewing their strategic vision.

## **6.7 Policy implications**

There are at least three different types of HEI in the UK. They are known as the Russell Group, the former "Civic" universities, and the moderns, which were previously polytechnics. The policy implications for WBL for each of these groups will be different, depending on their missions, values, policies and strategies. This research on WBL for HE/employer engagement has been based upon a case study university that was a former polytechnic, and consequently the following policy implications can only address the moderns, and may not apply to all HEIs in that category.

The research has found that WBL has had a positive impact on each of the three organisations involved in the HE/employer engagement partnerships by using networks to implement the strategic vision by changing the culture to increase the sustainability of the organisation. The uptake of WBL was supported by SDF monies which encouraged employers to participate in partnerships by co-funding courses; and which provided the University with: new staffing, including Business Development Managers; widespread training and networking opportunities; and administrative functions, including the CRMS system and associated personnel and training. SDF funding has ended but has left the University a legacy of change in terms of improved networks, culture, expertise, equipment and reputation. However, the economic landscape has also changed and the future is, as always, unknown.

### **6.7.1 The funding implications for HE and economic growth**

The funding for HE has continued its projected move towards a demand-led economy, where diminished support follows diminishing traditional undergraduate student numbers in the wake of the Browne Report. The student has to be 'at the heart' of HE provision because student numbers determine the income of universities. The danger of such a market-driven economy is that HE is not a commodity that equates neatly with cost or

profit: prices charged could compromise quality if too low in order to attract numbers, or if safeguards were not in place to maintain academic standards against the notion of buying a degree, especially with the opening of the education market to commercial enterprises.

This research has shown the importance of reputation, and that candidates already see the university as closer to their own values than either public or private organisations. Reputations take much longer to establish than to lose, and university accreditation of qualifications currently has an advantage over other types of accredited qualifications.

The private organisation case study considered the advantage of university accreditation important in case of a legal claim. Organisations are likely to pay fair prices for good quality. However, universities need to become more business-like, especially in terms of their time-scales, as has been highlighted in this research. If an organisation requires staff training, they need it now, rather than next year, and may be prepared to pay higher prices if their requirements can be met.

In terms of policy implications it is vital that universities continue to maintain their high academic standards, with rigorous safeguards, even if they have to suffer the accusations of being risk-averse. It is also important to nurture relationships with partner organisations: these relationships take a long time to establish, but the long term benefits may be considerable for both organisations and their region, because there were already indications of repeat business and expansion into new lines with both partner organisations. There may also be other spin-offs such as research contracts, and introductions to extended networks.

### **6.7.2 The balance of employer engagement and other HE priorities**

Following the Browne report (2011) the uptake of traditional graduate places at universities will be uncertain as future students face the cultural change of paying fees and being aware of actual costs. This may exacerbate the projected fall in numbers of potential undergraduate students with the projected NE demographic change being more severe and sooner than in other parts of the country.

Any shortfall in traditional undergraduate numbers will either have to be compensated for in other ways, or universities will be faced with cutbacks. Previously a university's main income was from teaching or research. Employer Engagement has been growing in a number of Universities, especially since the Leitch Report (2006). The model of HE incorporating EE in Figure 5.9 (section 5.8) shows the way that University, case study C, is now operating, and may be a useful model for other HEIs wishing to develop Employer Engagement partnerships. The section 6.4 and the model shown in Figure 6.5 may be helpful to these organisations.

The policy implication for any HE that does not want to experience a cutback in income is that their strategic vision will need to embrace expansion in at least one of the following:

- Employer Engagement, which should include support for :
  - Innovations, and
  - appropriate staffing levels with career structures, and
  - other resources.
- Research, which will require a vital core of research-active staff in order to attract funding, given the new REF, and lower Government funding.
- Teaching-related income (within an increasing competitive market) from
  - distance learning, and/or
  - Overseas Students, and/or
  - A niche market.
- A new Project.

### **6.7.3 Curriculum development and pedagogy**

This research has shown that employer engagement partnerships can negotiate a bespoke WBL curriculum. If a University is to be responsive to partnership requirements in a timely, business-like way, then it is imperative that the standards, expertise and reputation are available to provide the required curriculum promptly.

This research has also shown within the Courtyard Model, that WBL produces these qualities within the organisations that engage with WBL. The Courtyard Model has also shown that there are other types of pedagogy that may be developed, if research on the different types of knowledge/concepts/values linked with WBL is completed. Universities, such as case study C, that are experienced in WBL have the capability for such WBL research within WBL programmes. New pedagogies may lead to more research-informed teaching, or other pedagogical approaches. This research has already shown that there are considerable benefits for undergraduate students from the provision of WBL programmes at University C.

This fractal pattern, which is also based upon the Courtyard Model, has potential for repetition at a variety of levels, and could also contribute to the expansion of wider research, distance learning, Overseas Student provision, niche markets, and other innovative projects, including research-informed provision of open-access, as part of a Learning Journey Continuum. Once a University has made sufficient progress in WBL to be able to develop curriculum quickly to a high standard, with expert staff and an excellent reputation, then it has the potential to become a market leader, for business, and also for other educational organisations. By being associated with other large organisations of high repute, the mutual benefits are likely to increase, as are the networking opportunities.

The sooner a University starts employer engagement partnerships for WBL, the sooner it will develop the expertise required. However, the policy implication of this is that the organisation requires the appropriate strategic vision, networks and culture for

sustainability, and possible growth, along with a commitment to values such as integrity, valuing reputation, knowledge and people, and an insistence on the highest standards possible.

#### **6.7.4 WBL and investment for the future**

It would appear that the case study organisations for this research may be in a good position for the future.

As Naish (2009) stated:

One of the conventional fallacies of business practice when economic times are tough is for organisations of all sizes to cut their education and training budgets back to the bone. Longer-term wisdom has proven time and time again that this is precisely the wrong thing to do; rather, this is the time when education and training budgets need to be sustainable to ensure that businesses are robust enough to grow and adapt their talent for the leaner times in order to be competitive.

## **6.8 Summary**

### **6.8.1 The impacts of WBL**

The impacts of WBL on the three large organisations are:

- identified in Chapters 4 and 5;
- shown in Figures 4.29 (page 176); 4.31 (page 190); 5.3 (page 217); 6.2 (page 235).
- summarised in Figure 6.1 (page 231) showing SSM categories;
- go far beyond the original up-skilling of candidates and are largely positive.

WBL helps each organisation to:

- gain required skills;
- fulfil its strategic vision through its transformational impacts on culture, networks and sustainability as shown in
  - Figure 4.33 (p. 193);
  - Figure 6.3 (p.236): a fractal pattern;
- implement change by using Kotter's (1995) eight-stage strategy (pp. 232-3);
- fulfil the candidates' main motivations for study (Figure 6.6: p. 239).

The least motivating reasons for study challenge commonly-held assumptions about

- additional money and
- getting a new job

(although one candidate changed jobs soon after starting the programme, and findings may be limited to this research).

The values candidates attribute to organisations show that the University

- is considered different from other large organisations;
- has values concerning Reputation. Knowledge and People that are closer to the candidates' own values than those of the organisation that they work for.

### **6.8.2 Research outcomes for WBL as a field of study**

Three new models are presented:

- the Courtyard Model: Figure 5.8 (p.225)
  - WBL links candidates' values to the growth of the individual and their skills, and as people within their organisation;
  - growth of the individual also reflects the growth of the organisation.
- HEI/employer engagement model (REELKITS): Figure 5.9 (page 227);
- a New Partnership Model: Figure 6.4 (p.237) with
  - Preparatory Questions: Figure 6.5 (p.238).

### **6.8.3 Reflection on research methodology and limitations**

This is covered in section 6.4 above. Innovative techniques included fractal concept analysis which structured the grounded data analysis but may introduce bias, but the structure was essential for answering the research question and did not include content. Omitting the role of ICTs was another limitation.

### **6.8.4 Future research**

Future research suggestions include:

- WBL for older candidates;
- technology's role in WBL for networking and transmitting culture within an organisation;
- epistemologies that are related to WBL and may produce new pedagogies.

### **6.8.5 Operational suggestions for the researched partnerships**

Practical changes suggested within the three organisations include:

- clarification of mentoring arrangements;
- considering mentoring as optional or core modules;
- better support of candidates at the beginning of their academic studies;
- a small specialist WBL team to speed up and reduce costs of bespoke programmes to ease the transition between the business and academic zones of the University.

### **6.8.6 ROI**

WBL provides an immeasurable return on investment for organisations because the up-skilling of employees is the basis of the arrangement, but the impacts range far beyond the individual who is involved in the learning by using essential M2 knowledge underpinned by M1 knowledge to help the organisation to be an organisation that incorporates learning and embraces change.

Specific impacts are detailed for each organisation and are summarised at the end of:

- chapter 4 for the public and private organisations
- chapter 5 for the university.

### **6.8.7 Policy implications for modern HEIs**

Policy implications for modern HEIs, based upon this research, include WBL as a potential opportunity for development in terms of

- funding implications for HE and economic growth
- balance of employer engagement and other HE priorities
- curriculum development and pedagogy

### **6.8.8 WBL and investment for the future**

The case study organisations appear to be well-placed for the future with up-skilled workers ensuring “that businesses are robust enough to grow and adapt their talent” (Naish, 2009). The Courtyard Model shows that the growth of the individual through WBL positively impacts the growth of the organisation.



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## 7 References

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## Appendix 1: Data Collection Consent Form

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### Consent form

PhD Research at University [C]:

Work Based Learning: The Impact of Higher Education / Employer Engagement in North East England

I would be grateful if you were willing and able to participate in the above research (funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for England's Strategic Development Funding) as detailed below.

The research is intended to help to understand the way that Work Based Learning provision, organised through partnerships between University [C] and large organisations, can make positive contributions to the organisations involved. Analysed information will be fed back to those organisations, including University [C], but the identity of those making individual comments will not be revealed. The research may help to improve courses, provide a model for setting up new partnerships and make an original contribution to the body of knowledge of Work Based Learning as a field of studies. Organisations may benefit by making fuller use of the knowledge about the impacts.

Data may be collected at various times during the 2009-2010 and the 2010-2011 academic years as part of an iterative, action-research case studies approach. Two large organisations have agreed to be case studies for this research and are supportive of employee participation, which may include completion of questionnaire(s) and/or interview(s).

The usual ethical boundaries of research, including confidentiality and data protection, will apply. Principles for Research Ethics are outlined on [Case Study C] University's web page: [http://www. \[Case Study C\].ac.uk/sections/research/ethics.cfm](http://www.[Case Study C].ac.uk/sections/research/ethics.cfm)

Thank you.

Madeline Fisher, PhD Research Scholar      [M.Fisher@\[Case Study C\].ac.uk](mailto:M.Fisher@[Case Study C].ac.uk)

[Case Study C] [postal address]

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I am willing to participate voluntarily in PhD research: Work Based Learning: the Impact on Higher Education / Employer Engagement in North East England.

I understand that I am able to opt out of further involvement in the research at any time.

I agree to the use of my opinions and comments being published as part of the PhD thesis and also in any associated or subsequent articles, papers and presentations, subject to usual ethical research procedures including confidentiality and protection of personal data. The identity of those making individual comments will not be revealed.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/ \_\_\_\_/ 2010.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Organisation:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this completed form to Madeline Fisher ([M.Fisher@\[Case Study C\].ac.uk](mailto:M.Fisher@[Case Study C].ac.uk)) at the beginning of the interview.

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## Appendix 2: Candidate Questionnaire

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### Work Based Learning Participants

#### 1. Information

This survey is part of PhD research looking at the impact of Work Based Learning (WBL) on large organisations.

Your organisation, in partnership with Teesside University, provides University-level WBL courses for employees, and has agreed to participate in this research as one of the case studies.

When answering questions please remember that there are no right or wrong answers; your opinions are important because you have participated in a WBL course; your identity will remain confidential.

If you are not sure about what a question means, or if you do not wish to answer it, please just move on to the next question.

Thank you for taking part in this research which is dependent upon your perceptions of how your learning is impacting your organisation.

Please move to the next page by scrolling to the end of the page, and clicking the 'next' box. When you have completed the survey, click 'done' at the end of the last page, and the information will be returned automatically.



## Work Based Learning Participants

### 2. Work Based Learning Survey

#### 1. As a result of your studies are you

	No, or just a tiny amount	A small amount	A large amount	A huge amount
1a) More self-confident?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1b) More satisfied by your work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1c) Happier in your work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1d) Feeling more valued within your organisation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 2. As a result of your studies how effective are you now at

	Much more	More	No change	Less	Much less	Not applicable (N/A)
2a) Contributing to team work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2b) Communicating with colleagues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2c) Communicating with clients?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2d) Providing good customer service?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 3. As a result of your Work Based Learning course are some parts of your job now

	No, or just a tiny amount	A small amount	A large amount	A huge amount
3a) Easier?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3b) Done in a different way?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3c) More effective?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3d) Giving or getting better value for money?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Work Based Learning Participants

### 3. Relevance and understanding

#### 4. Was your WBL course useful in terms of:

	No, or just a tiny amount	A small amount	A large amount	A huge amount
4a) Relevance to your job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4b) Learning about tools, processes or systems (like Risk Assessment or Finance)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4c) Seeing how various jobs fit into the organisation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4d) Learning general (transferable) skills/knowledge that could be used in other jobs within the organisation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 5. Has the course helped your understanding of

	No, or just a tiny amount	A small amount	A large amount	A huge amount
5a) Benefits of University education?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5b) Your organisation's values?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5c) How to deal with challenges within your job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5d) The way your organisation does things?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 6. How often will you use learning from the course about:

	Daily	Most days	Weekly	Most weeks	Monthly	Rarely/never
6a) Reflective thinking?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6b) Customer relationships?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6c) Managing projects?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6d) Getting further help?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6e) The way things are done within the organisation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Work Based Learning Participants

### 4. Perceptions of value and culture

In the next two sections you are asked to rank your perceptions of value and culture in order of importance. There are no right or wrong answers. Please use your knowledge and experience of your own and other organisations where appropriate, and your opinions for others.

Your first choice (1st) will be the one you consider to be most important in that situation, and your fifth choice (5th) will be least important.

You can only put one tick in each line.

7. Please rank the following in order of importance to you at work, where 1st is the most important, and 5th is the least important.

	Time	Knowledge	Reputation	Money	People
7a) 1st choice (most important)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7b) 2nd choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7c) 3rd choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7d) 4th choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7e) 5th choice (least important)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. For Teesside University, please rank the following list in the order that you think is important to the University (where 1st is most important):

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
8a) Time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8b) Knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8c) Reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8d) Money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8e) People	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Work Based Learning Participants

### 5. Perceptions of value and culture in public and private sector organisations

Please use your knowledge and experience of your current organisation to answer the question about that sector. For the other sector use your knowledge, experience or opinion.

9. For a public sector organisation, please rank the following in the order that you think is important to the public sector organisation (where 1st choice is most important):

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
9a) Time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9b) Knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9c) Reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9d) Money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9e) People	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. For a private sector organisation, please rank the following in the order that you think is important to the private sector organisation (where 1st is most important):

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
10a) Time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10b) Knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10c) Reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10d) Money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10e) People	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Work Based Learning Participants

### 6. Impact of Work Based Learning

A short comment, or a sentence or two, would be helpful for each question on this page.

11. What impact has the learning from the course had on you?

12. How has this impacted your work?

13. What evidence could support this?

14. How has your learning made a difference to the organisation?

15. In what other ways could your learning help the organisation?

## Work Based Learning Participants

### 7. General information

General information for statistical analysis.  
Your information will remain confidential.

#### 16. Gender?

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female

#### 17. Age range?

- ☐ under 25  
☐ 25-34  
☐ 35-44  
☐ 45-54  
☐ 55 or above

#### 18. Did your employer fund your Work Based Learning course?

- ☐ Fully  
☐ Partially  
☐ No

## Work Based Learning Participants

### 8. Previous study

19. Before starting this course when did you last study in a class?

- ☐ 2005-2009    ☐ 2000-2004    ☐ 1995-1999    ☐ 1990-1994    ☐ Before 1990

Comment (if you wish)

20. Where was this?

- ☐ School  
☐ Further Education College  
☐ University  
☐ Work

Other (please specify)

21. What was your highest level of qualification before starting your course at Teesside University?

- ☐ None    ☐ Certificate    ☐ Degree  
☐ School qualifications    ☐ Diploma    ☐ Post Graduate Qualification

Other (please specify)

## Work Based Learning Participants

### 9. Motivation

This information may be useful for setting up new Higher Education / Employer Engagement Partnerships. It may also be useful background knowledge for the growing field of studies of Work Based Learning. It would be helpful if you could attempt all questions. Your identity will remain confidential.

22. How important to you were the following reasons when you were deciding to take this course?

I wanted:

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Important	Not very Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
22a) To learn more	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22b) To be able to do my job better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22c) To be a better leader / manager	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22d) To be able to apply for a new job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22e) Promotion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22f) More responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. How important were the following reasons when you were deciding to take this course?

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Important	Not very Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
23a) Wanting more money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23b) The course was affordable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23c) Concern about possible redundancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23d) Wanting recognition from others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23e) Wanting to validate experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23f) Wanting a qualification	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Work Based Learning Participants

### 10. Motivation for study

It would be helpful if you could attempt all questions

A comment box is available if there is some other reason that made you decide to take the Work Based Learning Course.

Your identity will remain confidential.

#### 24. How important were the following to you when applying for this course?

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Important	Not very Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
24a) Applying for APEL	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24b) Wanting an accredited qualification	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24c) Wanting a university qualification	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24d) Fitting around work commitments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24e) Time flexibility to study when I wanted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24f) It was available at a suitable time in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24g) It was an opportunity to meet other people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other reasons (if you wish to add more)

#### 25. How much of your own time did you spend studying in an average week (averaged over the time the course was running)?

<input type="radio"/> 0-2 hours	<input type="radio"/> 4-6 hours	<input type="radio"/> 8-10 hours
<input type="radio"/> 2-4 hours	<input type="radio"/> 6-8 hours	<input type="radio"/> Over 10 hours

Comment (if you wish)

## Work Based Learning Participants

### 11. Line Management

This section is about extending the research beyond the group that is taking the WBL course. It may lead to additional data about the impact of WBL extending into the organisation. It is not about checking up on you, nor your answers, nor on your performance. Any information gained will be written up in a way that will not identify individuals. It will not be used for appraisal purposes. Your help in identifying suitable people will be appreciated.

#### 26. Please state

your name   
Position title   
Organisation

#### 27. Please complete the following

Name of your line manager   
Their position title (if known)   
Their email address (if available)   
Their phone number (if available)

#### 28. Please nominate someone you line manage. If you do not line manage anyone, please write 'None' in the first box.

Name of someone you line manage   
Their position title   
email address (if available)   
Phone number (if available)

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## Work Based Learning Participants

### 12. Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.  
Your help is appreciated.

Kind regards,  
Madeline Fisher

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## Appendix 3: Analysis

**Figure A4.10 Full version: Balanced ratings and rankings of Candidate's Motivation for studying**

	AA&A (Public)		AA (Prior Public)		A (Public Current)		B (Private Current)		A & B (All Current)		A & B & AA (All)	
To learn more	33	1 <sup>st</sup>	13	1 <sup>st</sup>	20	1 <sup>st</sup>	17	4 <sup>th</sup>	37	3 <sup>rd</sup>	50	2 <sup>nd</sup>
To do my job better	27	3 <sup>rd</sup>	11	3 <sup>rd</sup>	16	3 <sup>rd</sup>	22	1 <sup>st</sup>	38	2 <sup>nd</sup>	49	3 <sup>rd</sup>
To be a better leader / manager	33	1 <sup>st</sup>	13	1 <sup>st</sup>	20	1 <sup>st</sup>	21	2 <sup>nd</sup>	41	1 <sup>st</sup>	54	1 <sup>st</sup>
To be able to apply for a new job	- 8	16 <sup>th</sup>	- 3	17 <sup>th</sup>	-5	14 <sup>th</sup>	- 9	16 <sup>th</sup>	-14	15 <sup>th</sup>	-17	16 <sup>th</sup>
For promotion	9	10 <sup>th</sup>	6	7 <sup>th</sup>	3	12 <sup>th</sup>	8	9 <sup>th</sup>	9	11 <sup>th</sup>	15	11 <sup>th</sup>
Wanting more responsibility	0	14 <sup>th</sup>	5	9 <sup>th</sup>	-5	14 <sup>th</sup>	10	8 <sup>th</sup>	5	12 <sup>th</sup>	10	12 <sup>th</sup>
Wanting more money	-21	18 <sup>th</sup>	- 9	19 <sup>th</sup>	-12	18 <sup>th</sup>	-19	18 <sup>th</sup>	-29	18 <sup>th</sup>	-40	18 <sup>th</sup>
Course was affordable (see note below)	-21	18 <sup>th</sup>	- 6	18 <sup>th</sup>	-15	19 <sup>th</sup>	-24	19 <sup>th</sup>	-39	19 <sup>th</sup>	-45	19 <sup>th</sup>
Concern about redundancy	-12	17 <sup>th</sup>	1	14 <sup>th</sup>	-11	17 <sup>th</sup>	-3	14 <sup>th</sup>	-14	15 <sup>th</sup>	-15	15 <sup>th</sup>
Wanting recognition from others	4	13 <sup>th</sup>	- 2	16 <sup>th</sup>	5	9 <sup>th</sup>	-2	13 <sup>th</sup>	3	13 <sup>th</sup>	2	13 <sup>th</sup>
Wanting to validate experience	22	4 <sup>th</sup>	8	6 <sup>th</sup>	14	4 <sup>th</sup>	13	6 <sup>th</sup>	27	4 <sup>th</sup>	35	4 <sup>th</sup>
Wanting a qualification	14	7 <sup>th</sup>	11	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3	12 <sup>th</sup>	18	3 <sup>rd</sup>	21	5 <sup>th</sup>	32	5 <sup>th</sup>
Wanting an accredited qual.	13	9 <sup>th</sup>	6	7 <sup>th</sup>	7	8 <sup>th</sup>	12	7 <sup>th</sup>	19	8 <sup>th</sup>	25	7 <sup>th</sup>
Wanting a university accredited qualification	9	10 <sup>th</sup>	5	9 <sup>th</sup>	4	10 <sup>th</sup>	16	5 <sup>th</sup>	21	5 <sup>th</sup>	25	7 <sup>th</sup>
Fitting	19	5 <sup>th</sup>	9	5 <sup>th</sup>	10	6 <sup>th</sup>	8	9 <sup>th</sup>	18	9 <sup>th</sup>	27	6 <sup>th</sup>

around work commitment												
Time flexibility for study	14	7 <sup>th</sup>	4	11 <sup>th</sup>	10	6 <sup>th</sup>	8	9 <sup>th</sup>	20	7 <sup>th</sup>	22	9 <sup>th</sup>
Available at a suitable time in my life	16	6 <sup>th</sup>	2	13 <sup>th</sup>	12	5 <sup>th</sup>	5	12 <sup>th</sup>	15	10 <sup>th</sup>	21	10 <sup>th</sup>
Opportunity to meet others	8	12 <sup>th</sup>	4	11 <sup>th</sup>	4	10 <sup>th</sup>	-7	15 <sup>th</sup>	-3	14 <sup>th</sup>	-1	14 <sup>th</sup>
Applying for APeL	-7	15 <sup>th</sup>	1	14 <sup>th</sup>	-8	16 <sup>th</sup>	-10	17 <sup>th</sup>	-18	17 <sup>th</sup>	-17	16 <sup>th</sup>

**Figure 4.15: Case Study A (Public Sector) current cohort perspective**

**d) Points allocated**

	Time	Knowledge	Reputation	Money	People
Self	23	28	23	21	26
Public	16	18	29	37	20
Private	14	19	31	38	18
University	16	22	32	21	29

Ranking according to the points gives this order:

**e) Re-ranking according to points**

	Time	Knowledge	Reputation	Money	People
Self	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Public	5 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Private	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
University	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>

Rewriting to show the categories in their selected rank order:

**f) Ranked order**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
Self	Knowledge	People	Time Reputation		Money
Public	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time
Private	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time
University	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Money	Time

**Figure 4.16: Case Study A (Public Sector) previous cohorts (AA) perspectives**

**a**

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Self</b>	13	18	18	19	22
<b>Public</b>	11	15	23	24	17
<b>Private</b>	9	14	24	19	14
<b>University</b>	5	21	20	13	16

**b**

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Self</b>	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Public</b>	5	4	2	1	3
<b>Private</b>	5	3	1	2	3
<b>University</b>	5	1	2	4	3

**c**

	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Self</b>	People	Money	Knowledge Reputation		Time
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time
<b>Private</b>	Reputation	Money	Knowledge People		Time
<b>University</b>	Knowledge	Reputation	People	Money	Time

**Figure 4.17: Case Study A (Public Sector) combined current and previous cohorts (A + AA) perspectives**

**a**

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Self</b>	36	46	41	40	47
<b>Public</b>	27	33	52	61	37
<b>Private</b>	23	33	55	67	32
<b>University</b>	21	43	52	34	45

**b**

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Self</b>	5 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Public</b>	5	4	2	1	3
<b>Private</b>	5	3	2	1	4
<b>University</b>	5	3	1	4	2

**c**

	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Self</b>	People	Knowledge	Reputation	Money	Time
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time
<b>University</b>	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Money	Time

**Figure 4.18: Case Study B (Private Sector) current cohort**

**a**

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Self</b>	35	36	29	19	46
<b>Public</b>	23	32	30	49	31
<b>Private</b>	22	29	40	46	28
<b>University</b>	25	38	42	25	31

**b**

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Self</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Public</b>	5	2	4	1	3
<b>Private</b>	5	3	2	1	4
<b>University</b>	4	2	1	4	3

**c**

	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Self</b>	People	Knowledge	Time	Reputation	Money
<b>Public</b>	Money	Knowledge	People	Reputation	Time
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time
<b>University</b>	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Money Time	

**Figure 4.19: All Respondents (A +AA +B)**

**a**

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Self</b>	71	82	70	54	93
<b>Public</b>	50	65	82	110	68
<b>Private</b>	45	62	95	113	60
<b>University</b>	46	81	94	59	76

**b**

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Reputation</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Self</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Public</b>	5	4	2	1	3
<b>Private</b>	5	3	2	1	4
<b>University</b>	5	2	1	4	3

**c**

	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Self</b>	People	Knowledge	Time	Reputation	Money
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time
<b>University</b>	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Money	Time

**Figure 4.20: Case Study A (public sector) current participants 5 point scale from 'self' criteria applied to organisations**

<b>A / current</b>	<b>K=5</b>	<b>P=4</b>	<b>T=3</b>	<b>R=3</b>	<b>M=1</b>	<b>Total points</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
<b>Public</b>	Money	Rep.	People	Knowl.	Time		
	5x1	4x3	3x4	2x5	1x3		
<b>Total</b>	5	12	12	10	3	42	3rd
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reput.	Knowledge	People	Time		
	5x 1	4x3	3x5	2x4	1x3		
<b>Total</b>	5	12	15	8	3	43	2nd
<b>Uni.</b>	R	P	K	M	T		
	5x3	4x4	3x5	2x1	1x3		
<b>Total</b>	15	16	15	2	3	51	1st

Public sector current participants' own criteria rank university organisations above private organisations, which are ranked above public sector organisations.

**Figure 4.21: Case Study A (public sector) previous participants (AA) 5 point scale from 'self' criteria applied to organisations**

<b>AA (prior)</b>	<b>P=5</b>	<b>M=4</b>	<b>K=3</b>	<b>R=3</b>	<b>T=1</b>	<b>Total points</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reput.	People	Knowl.	Time		
	5x4	4x3	3x5	2x3	1x1		
	20	12	15	6	1	54	2nd
<b>Private</b>	Reputation	Money	Knowledge People		Time		
	5x 3	4x4	3x3	3x5	1x1		
	15	16	9	15	1	56	1st
<b>Uni.</b>	Knowledge	Reputation	People	Money	Time		
	5x3	4x3	3x5	2x4	1x1		
	15	12	15	8	1	51	3rd

**Figure 4.22: Case Study A (public sector) all participants (A&AA) 5 point scale from 'self' criteria applied to organisations**

<b>A &amp; AA</b>	<b>P=5</b>	<b>K=4</b>	<b>R=3</b>	<b>M=2</b>	<b>T=1</b>	<b>Total points</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time		
	5x2	4x3	3x5	2x4	1x1		
	10	12	15	8	1	46	2nd
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time		
	5x 2	4x3	3x4	2x5	1x1		
	10	12	12	10	1	45	3rd
<b>Uni.</b>	R	P	K	M	T		
	5x3	4x5	3x4	2x2	1x1		
	15	20	12	4	1	52	1st

**Figure 4.23: Case Study B (private sector) current participants 5 point scale from 'self' criteria applied to organisations**

B / current	P=5	K=4	T=3	R=2	M=1	Total points	Ranking
<b>Public</b>	Money	Knowledge	People	Reputation	Time		
	5x1	4x4	3x5	2x2	1x3		
<b>Total</b>	5	16	15	4	3	43	<b>2nd</b>
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time		
	5x 1	4x2	3x4	2x5	1x3		
	5	8	12	10	3	38	<b>3rd</b>
<b>Uni.</b>	Reputati on	Knowledge	People	Money Time	*		
	5x3	4x4	3x5	2x1	2x3		
	15	16	15	2	6	54	<b>1st</b>

**Figure 4.24: All respondents: 5 point scale from 'self' criteria applied to organisations**

All	P=5	K=4	T=3	R=2	M=1	Total points	Ranking
<b>Public</b>	Money	Reputation	People	Knowledge	Time		
	5x1	4x2	3x5	2x4	1x3		
	5	8	15	8	3	39	<b>2nd</b>
<b>Private</b>	Money	Reputation	Knowledge	People	Time		
	5x 1	4x2	3x4	2x5	1x3		
	5	8	12	10	3	38	<b>3rd</b>
<b>Uni.</b>	Reput	Knowledge	People	Money	Time		
	5x3	4x4	3x5	2x1	2x3		
	15	16	15	2	6	54	<b>1st</b>

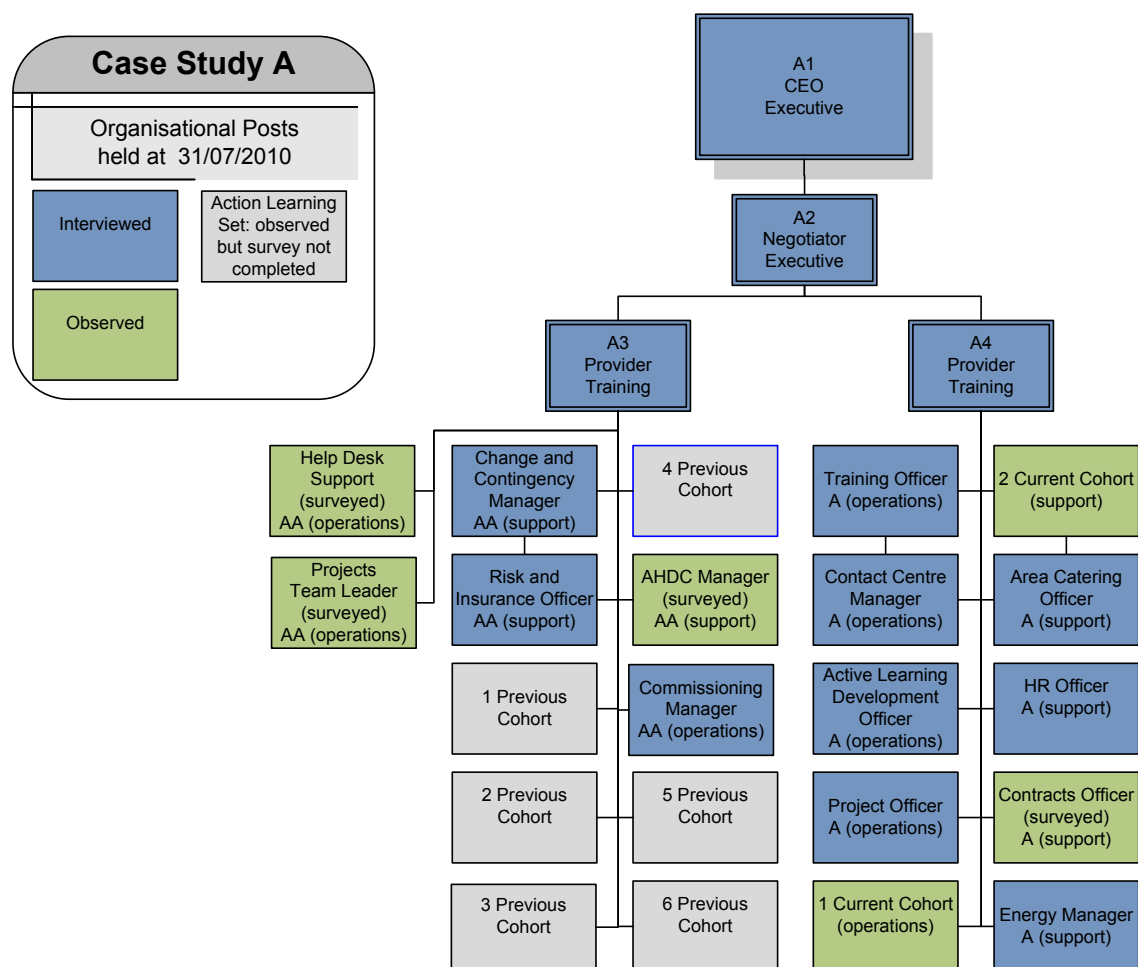
A table of the points for each type of organisation, as awarded by each cohort was then compiled.

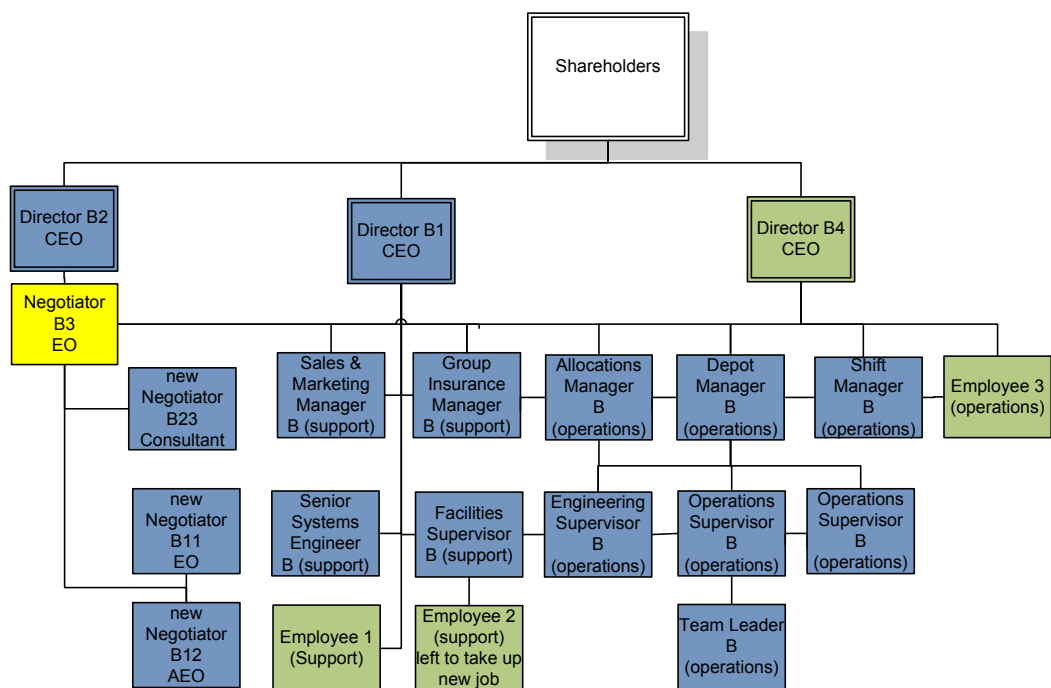
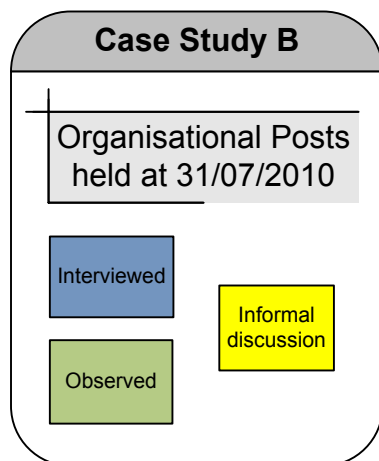
**Figure 5.25: Summary of points from cohorts' self criteria applied to organisations**

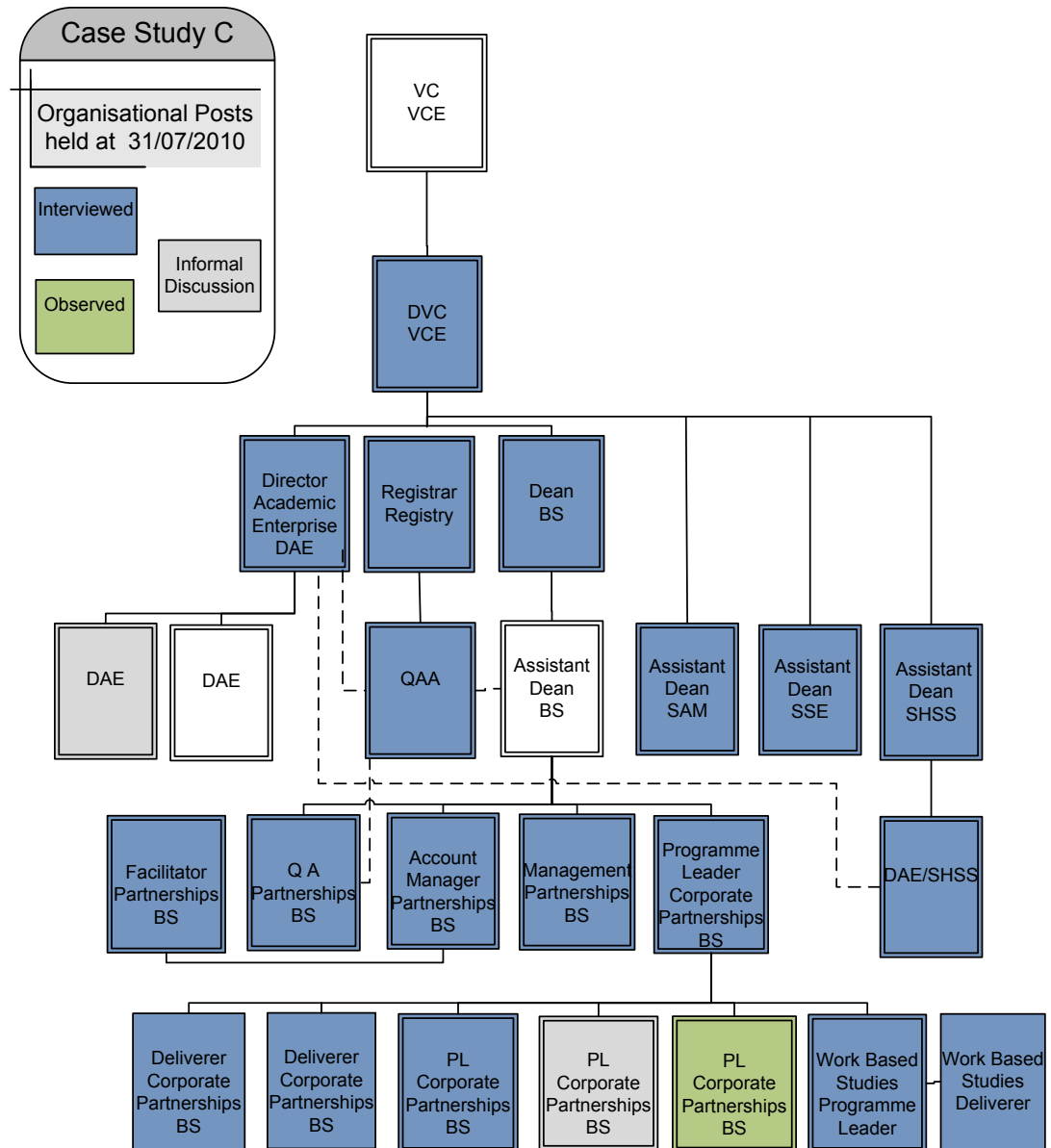
	Public organisation	Private organisation	University organisation	
<b>Public sector (current) A</b>	42	43	51	University ranked 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Public sector (previous) AA</b>	54	56	51	Exception: small cohort?
<b>Public sector (all) A&amp;AA</b>	46	45	52	University 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Private sector B</b>	43	38	54	Own ranked 3 <sup>rd</sup> University 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>All (A&amp;AA&amp;B) respondents</b>	39	38	54	University 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Range</b>	54 - 39 = 15	56 - 38 = 18	54 - 51 = 3	



## Appendix 4: Interviewees and their Organisations









- 6 What is the progress so far?
- where is the programme in terms of its overall development plan?*
- 7 What was [is] your organisation hoping to gain from the partnership?
- 8 How well do you feel this is being met?
- And why?*
- 9 Does your organisation have a vision statement, and if so, how does this fit in with the organisation's vision statement? / strategic objectives?/

## Part 2: The WBL provision that has been organised through the partnership

- 10 What was/are the main priority/priorities/objectives to be addressed by providing a course of study through the partnership?
- (Have they changed over time? Clarify the purpose(s) / focus(es) mirror language used)*
- 11 What was/is the organisation hoping to get from the course?  
(past, present, future)
- 12 What were the initial expectations?
- anticipated impacts*
- 13 Have they been met?
- (evidence?/ feelings?/extent?)*
- 14 Have things that were not original anticipated been addressed, perhaps incidentally, or by accident?

### **Part 3: impacts on the organisation?**

- 15      How has the course impacted the organisation?  
*Definition of impact?*  
*(economic, social, cultural and/or environmental?*  
*people / resources / efficiencies ? Evidence / Consequences/ (+-i)Effects?*
- 16      Have you observed people involved with the WBL programme doing things differently?  
*on their own initiative or under supervision?*  
*(participants' project work?)/(colleagues)*
- 17      How (if at all) has the individual learning moved into the way the organisation does things?  
*Have ways of doing things in the organisation changed?*
- 18      How much of this would you attribute to the WBL programme / partnership
- 19      What changes *(innovations / new ways of thinking about or doing something)* have arisen within the organisation since the course started?  
*Prompt (what new products, policies, procedures, attitudes, outlooks have been considered/adopted/implemented/taken up informally/abandoned?)*

### **Part 4: an opportunity to talk about impacts and the possible or actual consequences that may or have followed.**

- 20      Why and how have some of these impacts occurred, from your view point?  
*(the individual learning moved into the way the organisation does things?)*  
*(impact on the organisation?)*
- 21      With what consequences? (for individuals?/the organisation?),
- 22      Which of the impacts are desirable for the organisation, long term?  
*How and why?*
- 23      What are the *Enablers / blockers?*  
*Current / Future?*

- 24 How will the impacts help the organisation in the future?  
*(given the current economic climate?)*
- 25 How will impact be measured, evaluated and monitored?  
*and reported?*
- 26 Is there potential for addressing more for current candidates' knowledge/skills/abilities'?
- (1) (Which of these is most useful to the organisation?)*
- (2) Are there ways to share/ 'spread' the advantages?*

#### **Part 5 Close**

- 27 Are there other areas of impact, change or consolidation that need to be explored?
- 28 Any other comments?  
*(Negatives?)*
- 29 Are there any other sources of information (*reports / policy documents / articles / etc.*) that would help me to understand the developments?
- 30 Is there anyone else who would be useful for me to talk to about what we have discussed today?

I will eventually be following up this research with an executive summary.

**Thank you for your time.**

---

## Appendix 6: Semi Structured Interview: Candidates

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### Participant Interview

1. Name
2. Organisation
3. How long have you been with the organisation?
4. How long have you been in your current job?
5. What motivates you at work?
  
6. What have you enjoyed about the course?
  
7. What is your most important learning from the course?
  
8. How has that helped your work?
  
9. What changes has that made to others in the organisation?
  
10. What other things have been useful in the course?
  
11. Have they made any difference to the way you work?

*What you do?*

*How you do it?*

*Your outlook?*

12. Has that changed anything in the organisation?

*How?*

*Why?*

*With what consequences?*

13. Any other differences?



## Appendix 7: Poster presented at UALL WBL Conference 2009

The poster is presented below without the right-hand column, to maintain confidentiality.

The references from that panel are printed below the outline.

Each of the three panels is then enlarged to a full page.

### Work Based Learning and Higher Education/ Employer Engagement – A Knowledge Perspective

#### Academic Knowledge

##### Universities

- ♦ traditional guardians of knowledge
- ♦ theories from Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) have successfully guided practitioners.

'To know that' is called **propositional knowledge**

The knowledge generated within universities is called **Mode 1 knowledge**.

##### It is usually

- ♦ from a single discipline and is
- ♦ theoretical and
- ♦ cognitive

##### Mode 1 knowledge validity is granted through

- ♦ science based testing
- ♦ empirical findings
- ♦ conforming to accepted norms
- ♦ being confirmed by fellow academics.

##### Changes

- ♦ demographics
- ♦ technology

have produced a significant impact on Employers and HEIs and both need to

- ♦ adapt to changing markets.

##### Opportunities for

- ♦ developing new partnerships between organisations and HEIs
- ♦ offering courses that will meet the needs of employers and the candidate who study 'at, for and through work'.

##### Work Based Learning (WBL)

Boud, Solomon and Symes' (2001: 4) define the term WBL as:

'being used to describe a class of university programmes that bring together universities and work organisations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces.'

Portwood\* (2000) argues that WBL:

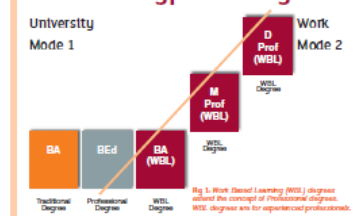
'...re-draws the epistemological map of higher education because the boundaries of disciplines are at most partly relevant to the spread of knowledge workers need in their work roles within an organisational setting.'

#### HE/Employer Partnerships with WBL

##### Employers and HE can find mutual benefits by forming partnerships

Work Based Learning (WBL) is a planned programme of accredited learning in a higher education context'. (Major, 2002)

#### Different types of degrees



##### Traditional University degrees

- ♦ use theory to inform workplace practice.
- ♦ are generally based within the HEI and are completed before starting employment.

##### Professional University degrees, such as the Bachelor of Education

- ♦ are usually based within the HEI
- ♦ theory is tested out under the supervision of experts within the workplace.

##### Work Based Learning degrees

- ♦ are for experienced professionals
  - with existing tacit knowledge derived from the workplace
- ♦ The location of study may be flexible and could be based
  - in the University,
  - at work,
  - and/or at a distance.

Work Based Learning (WBL) can provide a hybrid framework where individualised learning that is relevant to perspectives of both HEI and Work can be developed through now, meaningful and mutually beneficial interactive partnerships.

#### Work Based Knowledge

##### Workplace

- ♦ Skills and knowledge learned over time become 'tacit knowledge'. (Schon, 1983)
- ♦ A car driver may use tacit knowledge. Theory is learned then applied and adapted often so it becomes tacit knowledge.

'To know how' is called **practical knowledge**

The knowledge generated within the workplace is called **Mode 2 knowledge**.

##### It is usually

- ♦ 'produced outside the university in the context in which it will be used'
- ♦ tacit

##### Mode 2 knowledge

- ♦ can be shared with others when people are able to make explicit some of the implicit or tacit knowledge of the workplace (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1994)

People operating at expert level at work will be potential WBL candidates

Walsh\* (2008 p 15) cites Burns and Costley\* (2003 p45) as pointing out:

- ♦ 'these learners already have intellectual capital,
- ♦ what they seek from HEIs is not so much factual knowledge as ways to:
  - research and develop knowledge,
  - reflect and evaluate situations and
  - think autonomously.'

Walsh\* indicates that

- ♦ 'experience-based learning in the workplace'...involves 'supporting the learner in 'translating' their prior and current achievements outside the university into a discourse whereby they can be recognised by the academic community.'

##### Linking Theory and Practice

At postgraduate level WBL Research Methods enable:

- ♦ the learner's practice to be informed by theory, and
- ♦ the learner to inform theory through praxis.

Armstrong\* (2000 p38) states

- ♦ 'it can be argued that using research methodologies links practical work based knowledge with theoretical knowledge.'
- ♦ 'In summary, research and development in work based learning aids the development and use of an 'academic' and theoretical perspective in projects undertaken at work.'

##### Summary

A Mode 2 learning perspective' is the starting place for many potential candidates who are experienced professionals with well-developed skills that can be honed through a better understanding of Mode 1 (traditional) learning and theories, and who may generate new leading-edge theories because they are experts within their particular fields.

## References

- 1 Armsby, P (2000) *Methodologies of Work Based Learning in Work Based Learning and the University: New Perspectives and Practices* Paper 109. Birmingham: SEDa
- 2 Boud, D, Solomon, N and Symes, C (2001) 'New Practices for New Times' in Boud D and Solomon N (Ed) (2001) *WBL A New Higher Education?* Buckingham: SRHE and Open University.
- 3 Burns, G and Costley, C (2003) Non-Traditional Students and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Higher Education. In *Knowledge, Work and Learning: Conference Proceedings of the Work-Based Learning Network of the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning*, compiled by D. Hollifield and issued on CD.
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- 7 Nonaka, I and Takeuchi, H (1994) *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Created The Dynamics of Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 8 Portwood, D (2000) 'An Intellectual Case for Work Based Learning as a Subject' in Portwood, D and Costley, C (Ed.), (2000), *Work Based Learning and the University: New Perspectives and Practices*, Birmingham: SEDa.
- 9 Schön, Donald A. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*. USA: Basic Books.
- 10 Walsh, A (2008) What is distinctive about work-based knowledge and learning? in *Workforce Development*. York: The Higher Education Academy.

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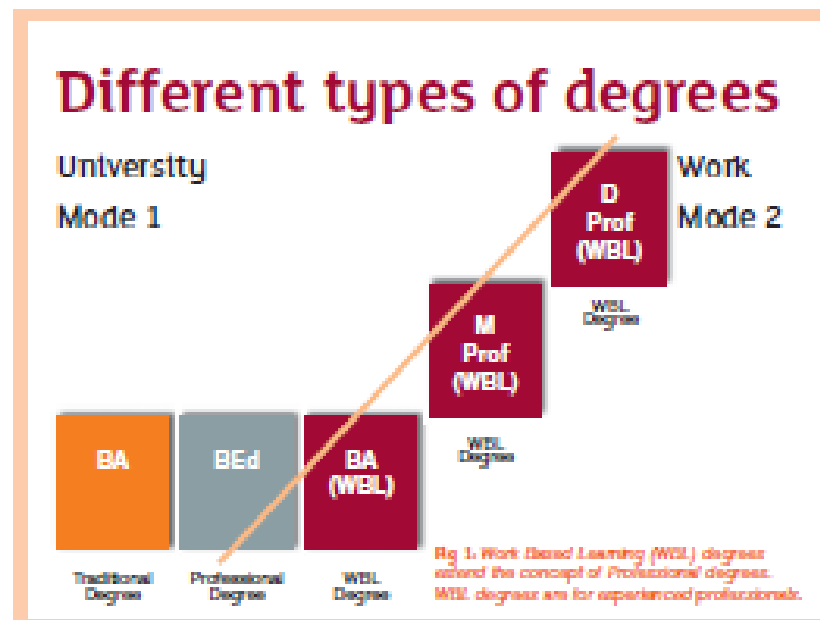
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---

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---

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At postgraduate level WBL Research Methods enable:

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- ✦ 'In summary, research and development in work based learning aids the development and use of an 'academic' and theoretical perspective in projects undertaken at work.'

## Summary

A Mode 2 learning perspective<sup>4</sup> is the starting place for many potential candidates who are experienced professionals with well-developed skills that can be honed through a better understanding of Mode 1 (traditional) learning and theories, and who may generate new leading-edge theories because they are experts within their particular fields.

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## Appendix 8: Paper presented at UALL WBL Conference 2010

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### Reassessing Assumptions Madeline Fisher

#### Reassessing Assumptions

*Work Based Learning is entering a new phase: it is time to reassess assumptions. WBL as a field of study and subject area in its own right needs an easily accessed solid core of research. This paper is based on progress with PhD research on WBL: the Impact of Higher Education / Employer Engagement.*

*Initial WBL pioneers set up highly successful university programmes that have transformed candidates by boosting confidence, reaffirming „self“ and validating work contributions. Highest standards of Quality Assurance have been met, maintained and surpassed to ensure University accreditation of awards. Improvements in administrative procedures provide some flexibility in meeting the needs of busy professionals. Pedagogy, curriculum and authentic assessment have been important considerations in writing new or reaccredited courses. Initial problems have been acknowledged and general solutions found through initiatives such as HEFCE's Strategic Development Funding.*

*However, problems remain: ambivalence about Mode 2 (how to) learning; an industry / academia divide; difficulty in locating transdisciplinary information; established, but not questioned, target candidate groups and funding arrangements; WBL projects assumed to benefit the candidate's place of work, with little research on the effects (although Nixon, 2008, indicated a positive impact on the workplace, and recommended further investigation).*

*What do employers want from HE? Can WBL meet the strategic needs of industry? Can WBL help organisations respond quickly to global market changes? Will WBL praxis be the economic base of the future? Does WBL offer opportunities for sustainability of HE, other places of employment and the environment? Can WBL provide a core for communities of practice, mentoring groups and advice forums? It is time to reassess assumptions, to think in new ways, and to find, through robust research, how WBL can take its deserved place in mainstream academic life. This paper will answer and raise questions about WBL research.*

*(300 words)*

39

## **Work Based Learning**

This paper raises a number of contentious questions about Work Based Learning that are important for the future. It acknowledges the work done by an entire generation of people dedicated to its success. It questions some of the generally held assumptions about work based learning, so that open discussion may help steer this field of knowledge strategically, rather than it continuing to go wherever the current flows. It questions the use of language that acts as a barrier to all. It suggests the need for easy access to research findings. It questions the supremacy of propositional knowledge and the exclusivity of Work Based Learning for employer engagement. It is based on progress with PhD research on "Work Based Learning: the Impact of Higher Education / Employer Engagement in North East England".

Work Based Learning is entering a new phase, and it is therefore an appropriate time to reassess assumptions. In researching the literature it is evident that much progress has been made since

"University Work-based Learning in the UK developed from a range of Employment Department funded initiatives in the early 1990s" (Garnett, 2009).

Work Based Learning has moved from being a mode of study on the remote edges of higher education, to a field of study and subject area in its own right that could be considered to be at the leading edge of the new directions universities are taking en route to 2020. In order to consolidate its potential leading position within higher education it needs an easily accessed solid core of research. Reassessing assumptions will add to the existing body of research.

### **The first assumption is**

**"everyone speaks the same language"**

### **How has this misconception evolved?**

All specialised fields of knowledge have a distinctive, unique vocabulary, where a single word can sometimes convey an entire concept (Shayer and Adey, 1993). With Work Based Learning evolving in a number of places at similar times, there has not been the standardisation of vocabulary that an organised Community of Practice (Wenger, 1999) tends to bring. Alternatively, the communication between smaller communities has been brief, and what one group has meant by a term has not necessarily been exactly the same as another has meant.

### **Why is it important to reassess the assumption?**

Precise terminology needs to be precise, especially if it is to be shared with others, either within the Work Based Learning community, or within and between universities and business organisations. The meaning of „a portfolio“ to an artist may be very different from the meaning (and expectations) of „a portfolio“ to a Work Based Learning lecturer, and a portfolio of evidence may mean something entirely different again to a member of the police force.

Universities tend to go one step further with academics using shortened forms for so much terminology that many conversations can be confusing for anyone who is not expert in that field. Using unfamiliar language can be interpreted as a way of excluding people (Bernstein, 1962). Use of technical language was an initial difficulty with access to computers; careless use of language prevents access to universities.

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### **What are the consequences?**

If Work Based Learning is to be considered as part of mainstream university, then it has to have a common language, with clear definitions of specific terminology that can be easily accessed by anyone. Part of the difficulty in accessing information about Work Based Learning is that even the way the words are written is questionable: should capitals or hyphens be used? If „Work Based Learning“ is put under headings on a university web site there are a number of categories that may, or may not find the information. If this is problematic, then actually looking for research material becomes almost impossible for someone new to Work Based Learning, because there are few obvious places to look. If Work Based Learning is to have a credible presence throughout the academic world then standardisation of language and easy accessibility of research are essential.

### **However**

Work Based Learning has a body of research already, and it is growing quickly. It is pleasing to see that a new Emerald journal specifically addressing Work Based Learning will provide a focal point for research findings. It is also pleasing that in the last 15 months four books, written collaboratively for Work Based Learning candidates and those who teach them, have been published with „Work Based Learning“ as, or included in, the title. This is helping to establish Work Based Learning within HE. According to Costley, Elliott and Gibbs (2010)

Despite the differences in the implementation of work based learning across the UK and internationally, programmes that include elements of work based learning as a mode of study still have much in common with those that treat it as a field of study (Costley and Armsby, 2006; Gibbs and Garnett, 2007; Helyer, 2010). There are shared or similar approaches to knowledge and understanding as generated outside of the university in a context of practice. There are similar pedagogical approaches, where students are „experts“ in the sense that they are or have been in a particular work situation and have understanding of its nuances, micro-politics and so on.

They also say:

The curriculum in work based learning is a new and emerging field of study in higher education (Boud and Solomon, 2001; Gibbs and Costley, 2006). Universities are now beginning to establish a research infrastructure that promotes and develops excellence in practitioner-led research and development and to apply quality assurance to the delivery mechanisms of research and development at work. To this end, there has been a steady growth of undergraduate awards, Master's degrees and Professional Doctorates (Scott et al., 2004) that focus on professional areas of learning.

Everyone involved in higher education, and particularly anyone involved in Work Based Learning, needs to be aware of the assumption that everyone speaks the same language.

### **The second assumption for reassessment:**

**“theoretical knowledge is more important than practical knowledge”.**

### **How has this misconception evolved?**

Universities have traditionally been the guardians of theoretical knowledge. Before the spread of computers and the internet the university was the first place to visit to find high level information. Practical knowledge was concerned with the world of work, and technical or vocational education, and for much of the twentieth century was the domain of the technical college or the polytechnic.



### **Why is it important to reassess the assumption?**

There are still some academics who remain unconvinced about the place of Mode 2 or „how to“ knowledge (Gibbons et al., 1994) mainly because they see a divide between the traditional „know that“ or propositional knowledge of the university and the „know how“ or practical knowledge that is acquired through hands-on experience, usually within the world of work. Schön (1983) referred to this practical knowledge as tacit knowledge. There is no such barrier to initial training of teachers or nurses who gain the theoretical Mode 1 knowledge within the university, and apply it to guide their practice, under expert guidance, in schools or hospitals. In a just, equitable world, it is important to provide opportunity for all people. With Work Based Learning, the coin is reversed: the candidate has learned the practical skills, (and has probably become a highly skilled expert) and is returning to university to formally acquire some of the theoretical insights that may have been learned tacitly; to make explicit that which is implicit. Polanyi (1958) in Critten (2007) maintains that *all* knowledge (including so-called objective facts of science) involves a personal and subjective component – tacit knowledge but, for this knowledge to be realised and shared it has to be made explicit.

### **What are the consequences?**

Consider a surgeon with theoretical knowledge but no practical knowledge/experience and the consequences could be frightening. Theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge are inextricably linked. According to Ryle (1949:58-59) who was influenced by Wittgenstein's insights into language:

Overt intelligent performances are not clues to the workings of minds; they are those workings. ....

Learning how or improving in ability is not like learning that or acquiring information. Truths can be imparted, procedures can only be inculcated, and while inculcation is a gradual process, imparting is relatively sudden. It makes sense to ask at what moment someone became apprised of a truth, but not to ask at what moment some acquired a skill. „Part trained“ is a significant phrase, „part-informed“ is not. Training is the art of setting tasks which the pupils have not yet accomplished but are not any longer quite incapable of accomplishing.

It is important to remove artificial barriers within universities so that everyone can work well together in a collegiate atmosphere for a common purpose. It is only when the artificial barriers between different types of knowledge are removed that organisations and HE can start a meaningful dialogue, and even then, the issue of terminology can be an obstruction. Work Based Learning provides the natural middle ground, between the practical world of work, where the „know how“ has been acquired, and the traditional academic world, and can combine the theoretical „know that“ with the „know how“ to give praxis.

Praxis may well provide a much needed boost in the global economy. As new technologies evolve people will see new applications. These applications will need both theoretical and practical knowledge to turn them into commercially viable products. The Work Based Learner will have the praxis to do whatever is required, quickly. 42

**Additionally**

Garnett (2009) stated that

University Work-based Learning in the UK developed from a range of Employment Department funded initiatives in the early 1990s. These initiatives generally flourished in a policy context which valued graduate employability and sought to extend participation in higher education. Boud and Solomon (2001) highlighted that the distinctive features of University work based learning stem from a partnership between a University and an external organisation or community of practice specifically established to foster learning. Employment has become even more prominent within the University system during the twenty-first century. According to UKCES in Simplification of Skills in England, (2008; 5): Two recent government reviews – those of Sir Andrew Foster on Further Education, and Lord Leitch Review of the skills challenges facing the UK to 2020 – have argued that the fundamental purpose of the UK's tertiary education and skills systems needed to be „employment“. Recent UK Government policy has sought both to increase the employment orientation and fitness-for-purpose of the post-compulsory education and skills system/s.

Although much of the focus concerning employment has been directed at improving employability skills for learners, whether through schools, colleges, universities or employment providers (UKCES, 2009a), there has been a move towards this being based on

“real workplace practice, through work placements or other close contact with employers, and involving input from people outside the mainstream learning environment.”

In order to develop these skills UKCES suggests that good practice is likely to be experiential, personal, with real consequences and reflective.

These are the practices that are fundamental to Work Based Learning. Universities that already have a strong Work Based Learning presence can capitalise on their existing expertise and relationships with employers to develop good practice, and opportunities for work placements, for undergraduate students who need to develop employability skills before entering the workplace. Instead of Work Based Learning being at the perimeter of the university, it has an opportunity to move to the centre of operations with the changing face of Higher Education and the need for employer engagement at all levels of study for all university faculties.

**The third assumption for reassessment:**

**“Employer Engagement is the exclusive domain of Work Based Learning within a university”**

**How has this misconception evolved?**

Work Based Learning has travelled a long way since its introduction into universities in the early 1990s, but it has not been an easy journey. The initial WBL pioneers set up highly successful university programmes that have transformed candidates by boosting confidence, reaffirming „self“ and validating work contributions (Helyer, 2008). The highest standards of Quality Assurance have been met, maintained and surpassed to ensure University accreditation of awards (QAA, 2008). Improvements in administrative procedures provide some flexibility in meeting the needs of busy professionals. Pedagogy (Nottingham, 2009), curriculum and authentic assessment have developed considerably and have been important considerations in writing new or reaccredited courses. Initial problems have been acknowledged and general solutions found through initiatives such as HEFCE’s Strategic Development Funding.

Universities are set up in Faculties, with each being an autonomous power base, usually working harmoniously with other faculties. Work Based Learning does not fit easily into existing faculties because it has not been a long-established part of the university tradition. In becoming accepted into the university structure, some alliances may have been formed, and Work Based Learning may have been „adopted“ into a faculty. However, in some universities lines of demarcation sometimes exist between faculties. Having struggled alone, some Work Based Learning „groups“ may be reluctant to join with others. Some faculties may remain reluctant to become involved with Work Based Learning.

**Why is it important to reassess the assumption?**

Although employer engagement has always been a part of Work Based Learning, it is now considered to be an important part of all university faculties. The following quotation defines Employer Engagement:

Essentially, it refers to the collaborative relationship between employers and the HE sector in developing awards that meet both academic needs and the practical needs of the industry. Although institutions are already involved extensively with employers, there is potential for the HE sector to build more effective relationships with them to maximise the benefits for learners, employers and employees.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/higherquality/hq26/default.asp#p25> [accessed 31/03/10]

Employer engagement is also considered as part of the way to stimulate demand (UKCES, 2009b) and to provide the skills needed for the UK to be within the top countries considered to be „world class“ (Leitch, 2006). Future developments in technology will demand a more highly skilled workforce, and universities are expected to provide the appropriate education for both new entrants and existing employees to reach higher levels.

**What are the consequences of the assumption?**

There appears to be a huge potential market for employer engagement with higher education. It is too big to be accommodated exclusively within most existing Work Based Learning structures, and the needs of employers may demand more specialised knowledge than can be supplied by a single faculty. In 2005 an estimated £300 million out of £33.3 billion was spent with HE on training. There is potential to aim for £5 billion for HE provision (King, 2007). Employer Engagement is a whole-university partnership, and as universities and employers tend to be mainly located within a specific geographical area, the partnership has potential for long-term investment, with much repeat business evolving as needs change.

Work Based Learning groups are likely to be invaluable to their universities in meeting new demands; with experience in the workplace, they have the contacts, relationships, expertise, appropriate pedagogy and numerous essential strategies. This is likely to make Work Based Learning groups a vital part of more flexible university structures for the foreseeable future, but specialist expertise will also be required.

However, a possible impact of the global recession may be that organisations could focus on operations rather than investment. As Naish (2009) stated:

One of the conventional fallacies of business practice when economic times are tough is for organisations of all sizes to cut their education and training budgets back to the bone. Longer-term wisdom has proven time and time again that this is precisely the wrong thing to do; rather, this is the time when education and training budgets need to be sustainable to ensure that businesses are robust enough to grow and adapt their talent for the leaner times in order to be competitive.

By being prepared to meet whatever demands employer engagement places upon universities, the UK is likely to be best placed to make the most of the upturn in the economic cycle.

### **Work based learning, reflective thinking and research**

One of the key features of Work Based Learning as a mode of study is that reflective thinking is at its very core. It is thinking about how things were, how they are, and how they could be, and it is the personal learning that results from this that motivates the practitioner to research and improve. Most people in HEIs who are involved with Work Based Learning started out in another field of knowledge. What is it that draws them to Work Based Learning? What are the commonalities that tie them together as a Community of Practice? Are they people-centred, rather than subject centred? Are they multitasked, with transferable skills that can adapt to a multidiscipline or transdisciplinary approach to learning? Are they highly creative? What are their personal and professional ideologies and philosophies?

Sometimes an anomalous or unexpected event starts a new train of thought. Scientific discoveries start when someone notices something that does not fit the normal pattern. The rule or law that the Scientific Community of Practice has accepted as being correct, and the assumption that has been held believing the law to be true, needs to be reassessed to give a new law that can account for the anomaly, and that can be accepted by the Scientific Community of Practice. Karl Popper's contribution to 20th Century Science will be best remembered for the notion that Scientific Laws only hold true until someone disproves them. This can be true of any discipline. Something triggers a reassessment of a previously held assumption and new theory comes into being. Within the academic community reassessment is associated with research.

### **My research**

My research looks at partnerships between Teesside University and employers developed to improve and enhance practices at work through a variety of negotiated Work Based Learning approaches. These range from working with an Employer to accredit in-house courses and providing bespoke short courses, to full University award bearing courses. The perceived effects of this employer engagement on the organisation and on the university are being investigated. The focus is on continuing professional development for experienced professionals, rather than as initial training for prospective or new employees.

A large public sector organisation and a large private sector organisation have agreed to participate as case studies and ethics approval has been granted. Data collection using an iterative action research approach, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews (Wengraf, 2001) is investigating the impact of Work Based Learning in terms of improving practices at

work. Quantitative data is also sought where possible. Grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) will be used to analyse data.

The action research investigation builds on recommendations of previous research (Nixon, 2008) confirming the positive impact of Higher Education / employer engagement, by providing rich qualitative comments and some quantitative evidence to illuminate the benefits for all stakeholders. Additional contributions to new knowledge include a model to shorten costly lead times for establishing future partnerships, deep evidence confirming the positive impact of partnerships helping organisations achieve strategic objectives, and improvements in the knowledge base and delivery of WBL using Mode 2 „how to“ knowledge (Gibbons *et al*, 1994) in NE England.

HEIs need to consider new markets to ensure sustainability due to changing demographics and rapidly changing technology. WBL for experienced professionals provides HE access to a completely new group of previously overlooked clients, with relatively little overlap on traditional mature students. Learning Partnerships between HEIs and Organisations can educate the organisation's workforce, by tailoring the provision to meet the specific needs of both the individuals and the organisation. Well educated workers able to respond quickly to new market forces, new technology, or even global changes, may contribute to the organisation's sustainability.

Findings may be of use both within and beyond the original HEI and organisational participants. They will be useful for the growth of WBL within the university, the organisations and will also add to the current body of knowledge within the discipline.

Teesside University (TU) is a leading „employer-facing“ institution engaging in Higher Education/employer partnerships in the Tees Valley, NE England. It is „employer-facing“ by choice and through a dynamic culture and attitude change where the university has re-branded itself as „inspiring success“ with a commitment to becoming one of the UK's leading universities for engagement with business. In the words of two Tees Valley executives:

The whole place has totally revolutionised its attitude to what industry wants and what people working in industry want, and I think the level of co-operation between the team up there and the team up here is astonishing, to be perfectly frank with you, and it's enormously positive from my point of view.

They have transformed that university for sure, and done it in such a way that one of the big successes is that they have really engaged with industry and what industry wants, and have tailor made courses around that as well. And it's not just ourselves; there are others...

This doctoral level research is investigating the perceptions of the learning arising from this engagement.

#### **What do employers want from HE?**

Initial indications of research into **Work Based Learning: the impact of Higher Education / Employer Engagement in North East England**, are that employers regard recruitment and retention of workers as a high priority. In many cases the specific skills required within a particular industry are not easily found. This leads to issues of sustainability for the organisation. One way of overcoming this difficulty is to take workers who already know the organisation and its culture and to develop the skills needed for the organisation.

UKCES (2009a) analyses and lists confusion for employers as

- Difficulties of access of employers to the system [of initiatives]
- Complexity of programmes and initiatives
- Too restrictive constraints on individual programmes and initiatives
- Excessive bureaucracy in administrative arrangements for programmes or initiatives
- Complexity of structures and organisation
- Rapidity of change

It also suggests a twin-track approach of

A. Proposals that will relatively quickly provide a much simpler interface between employers and the public skills system, concealing much of the complexity in order to deliver a simpler and much more responsive service to employers – sometimes called „hiding the wiring“;

B. Longer-term proposals that will fundamentally simplify the underlying programmes and structures, and ensure a much more employment-responsive system that integrates employment and skills services in the most effective and sustainable way – „rewiring the circuit board“.

In December 2007 Teesside University embedded Work Based Learning and Workforce Development within its Character, Vision & Aims for 2008 -2011. Work Based Learning is part of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2009 – 2012 (LTAS), a central component of the University's quality enhancement framework. The University has a Work Based Learning Working Group with representatives from all schools and departments, and a Work Based Learning Research Group. Work Based Studies, TU's recently reviewed Work Based Learning programmes have a re-accredited framework with options for some open shell projects, and/or courses delivered by any school within the university. This provides a flexible approach for individuals and employers.

Through Strategic Development funding Teesside University has appointed Account Managers for each University School, and has developed a corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. These initiatives ensure that one person is the key contact for an employer, with the aims of „hiding the wiring“, finding out what employers want, and working towards „rewiring the circuit board“.

Partnerships develop by asking employers what their needs are, not just for the provision of courses, but as a genuine, long-term partnership with mutual benefits for both. The University also provides networking opportunities for organisations, and is central to a number of Communities of Practice.

Preliminary indications of this research are that the impact of WBL on an organisation is about growth in the capacity of the individuals who already know and understand the organisation, and that these individuals are the organisation's greatest asset. In times of adversity the tendency is to concentrate on operations, rather than in investing for the future. Where the culture of an organisation is such that the valuing of the individual is embedded, then sustainability is thought to be likely. Investing in the development of individuals is considered the key to recruitment and retention. Large organisations see the partnership as beneficial in terms of prestige and the associated stature. It enables their employees to be offered courses with accredited qualifications and opportunities to progress along a continuum to higher levels. It provides flexibility for the particular needs of the organisation, and security of standards, which, in turn, can lead to more business because of the assurance that it gives to their own customers. It helps with recruitment and retention of employees, and some employees see participation in Work Based Learning courses as a

way of showing their commitment to the organisation at a time when other organisations are making redundancies.

This research, following on from that of Nixon, is looking at an assumption that Work Based Learning provided in response to partnerships between HE and an organisation has an impact on the organisation. Without research to reassess this assumption it would not be possible to say how, why and with what consequences this impact is perceived by the organisation's stakeholders. If the impacts are not known, then any benefits are unlikely to be used fully.

The value of WBL in transforming people is without doubt one of the most amazing educational processes. The opportunity for WBL to bring about the transformation of organisations, including HEIs, in a new global economy based on praxis developed through partnerships, can be a reality, if we are prepared to re-assess assumptions. WBL presents opportunities for social justice. WBL presents opportunities for those who have much professional capability. WBL presents a way forward for organisations, including HEIs, in a changing global market, in a changing world. By working in partnership both HEIs and organisations can benefit. . Partnerships are foremost about people; they are not about systems or policies. For partnerships to succeed each partner needs to give and each partner needs to gain. Each needs to listen, and to learn from the other.

"Work Based Learning academics need to critique their own practice and engage in scholarship that will inform and develop the field." (Costley and Armsby, 2008).

It is time to reassess assumptions.

*(4360 words)*

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